

New Netherlands Coin Co., Inc.



October 26, 1962

Mr. Eric P. Newman  
Edison Brothers Stores, Inc.  
400 Washington Ave.  
St. Louis 2, Mo.

Dear Eric:

Mr. Robert Bashlow, of this City, has prepared a new "restrike" which he intends to have manufactured and to promote. A specimen of this item is enclosed herewith, for your examination and information. This is one of the first few samples made, and I asked Bashlow for a few to send out.

Contrary to misguided opinion in some quarters, I have not been (and am not) sympathetic with either the Bashlow manufacturing or selling of this sort of material. However, Robert Bashlow has come to me for advice, and not being able to talk him out of his seemingly successful operations, I decided to advise him to make his productions as technically correct and as unoffensive as possible.

Bashlow has unearthed an obverse die, obviously for a pattern J. J. Conway (1861) half eagle. This die has a peculiar buckle at the center, as you can see, and the milling has undoubtedly been added around the obverse periphery. Even so, I have examined this obverse die, and know that it is authentic. It is possible that this is the missing obverse from the set of Conway dies in the Colorado State Historical Society.

Probably the main reason I am sending this piece to you is because I suggested part of the reverse design to Bashlow - the use of the actual word "RESTRIKE" as part of the reverse design.

If junk (and I did not put that in quotations) like the enclosed, must be made, it should at least be clearly identifiable and technically and lawfully sound. You will note that the planchet is not the thickness of the U.S. 5¢ piece, but is thicker. Bashlow has either to make these thicker or thinner than the regular U. S. coin, to circumvent the use of these pieces as "slugs."

Probably the best way to discourage manufacture of these, is to ridicule their value either as a collectors item or as an investment (for sale to future collectors). I doubt very much if this type of restrike could possibly ever deceive anybody, particularly the way the thing has been executed.

New Netherlands Coin Co., Inc.

New Netherlands Coin Co., Inc.

Page 2 - Mr. Eric P. Newman. SUITE 401  
WEST 47TH STREET  
NEW YORK 36, N. Y.

PHONE PLATE 7-5268

Trusting that this information will prove to be of some interest and value to you, I remain

Mr. Eric P. Newman  
Edison Brothers Stores, Inc.  
400 Washington Ave.  
St. Louis, Mo.

Sincerely,

John J. Ford

John J. Ford, Jr. 21

JJF:dn

Dear Sir:

Enc1.

Mr. Robert Bashlow, of this City, has prepared a new "restrike" which he intends to have manufactured and to promote. A specimen of this coin is enclosed herewith, for your examination and information. This is one of the first few samples made, and I asked Bashlow for a few to send out.

Contrary to misguided opinion in some quarters, I have not been (and am not) sympathetic with either the Bashlow manufacturing or selling of this sort of material. However, Robert Bashlow has done his best for advice, and not being able to talk him out of his seemingly misguided opinion, I decided to advise him to make his products as technically correct and as unoffensive as possible.

Specimen has an obverse die, obviously from the pattern of a 1795 (1804) half eagle. This die has a peculiar buckle at the neck, as you can see, and the milling has undoubtedly been added around the reverse periphery. Even so, I have examined this obverse die, and know that it is authentic. It is possible that this is the missing obverse from the set of Conway dies in the Colorado State Historical Society.

Probably the main reason I am sending this piece to you is because I suggested part of the reverse design to Bashlow - the use of the actual word "RESTRIKE" as part of the reverse design.

If junk (and I did not put that in quotations) like the enclosed must be made, it should at least be clearly identifiable and technically and lawfully sound. You will note that the planchet is not the thickness of the U.S. 5¢ piece, but is thicker. Bashlow has either to make these thicker or thinner than the regular U. S. coin, to circumvent the use of these pieces as "lings."

Probably the best way to discourage manufacture of these, is to ridicule their value either as a collector's item or as an investment (for sale to future collectors). I doubt very much if this type of restrike could possibly ever deceive anybody, particularly the way the thing has been executed.

October 30, 1962

Mr. John J. Ford, Jr.  
176 Hendrickson Avenue  
Rockville Centre  
Long Island, New York

Dear John:

I am replying to your letter of October 26, 1962 quickly even though I have other unanswered letters sent prior to now.

The fact is that you are giving advice to Mr. Bashlow in helping him in his productions. You can justify the fact that you are not sympathetic with his productions or with the sale of them but, nevertheless, you become involved by advising him.

The sad thing is that those who have subsequently advertised his prior productions keep stating that they are restrikes, regardless of the fact that they are from transfer dies. There is no way of controlling these ads.

The new item which you enclosed, I assume, is made from a transfer die and the transfer die has had beading and a raised rim added so that it is not even the same piece and is, therefore, not "from the original obverse die" as is stated on the reverse. The fact that the word "restrike" is worked into the back design is gilding a lily. This could not deceive any one. If people actually bought the combination of the Sommer Island Hog and the Hudson-Fulton metal, then they will buy anything.

I have a feeling that Bashlow has taken quite a beating even though financially successful and why he continues to produce things of this sort I do not know.

Page 2

October 30, 1962

Mr. John J. Ford, Jr.

Thank you for advising me of this matter and I am  
only giving you my sincere reactions.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb



November 6, 1962

Mr. Eric P. Newman  
Edison Brothers Stores Inc.  
400 Washington Ave.  
St. Louis 2, Mo.

Dear Eric:

Thank you for your letter of October 30th, with comments on the Bashlow operation. I hope you do not think that I am trying to be a numismatic "Janus" in advising Bashlow, but I can not turn any body down, who seeks honest advice and follows it. I did tell him, however, that I thought that the day of "manufactured junk," be it "restrikes" or medals, would soon be over. Now to get down to serious business:

In 1938, after some correspondence with the son of Wm. West Bradbeer, I ascertained that Bradbeer's father had prepared a detailed manuscript on Colonial and Continental currency, subsequent to publishing his book on Confederate notes in 1915.

One of our customers, Mr. Arnold Perl, is interested in Continental currency, and being somewhat of a writer, is also interested in numismatic literature and publications. I asked Arnold to trace down the long lost Bradbeer manuscript, and, he has located it. It ~~contains~~ approximately 15 Chapters, consisting of 225- 250 pages. Part of it was set in type, but apparently either the printer folded up, or Bradbeer did. It commences with ~~the~~ 17 page introduction, and individual introductions to each State, together with a listing. I am enclosing a copy of the Connecticut section, which is indicative of the whole, as to both quality, arrangement, and number of errors.

Mr. Bradbeer would like to see his father's manuscript put into shape and published. Mr. Perl would like to have me publish it, providing I can get it out in six to nine months time. Ford Numismatic Publications, has less than 100 copies of the "Standard Paper Money Catalog, Part I" on hand, and we need a new reference-price list, re the series.

I would like to propose the following:

(1) That you look over the whole Bradbeer manuscript, make corrections, and integrate it with the Raymond listing;

JOHN J. FORD, JR.

Page 2. Mr. Eric P. Newman.

(2) that your corrections can be rough, and that Arnold Perl, knowing how to write, can edit from a technical (that is correct English) viewpoint; (3) that all three of us, can select enough notes from various sources, so as to illustrate at least one note from each issue, at least to the extent where notes can be located.

This would not remove the master plan, but make your ~~compiling~~<sup>new</sup>, with the help of the Boyd Collection, subsequent to this production, a very specialized work in much greater depth.

I am gathering together every obscure pamphlet and book on Colonial and Continental paper to loan you for the major work over the long pull. These will not be available until I get my affairs straightened, and I think it will all work out nicely, as the Bradbeer manuscript seems enough for one hell of a good start on an interim work.

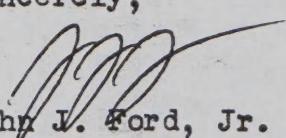
I have not had a chance to check my files of "Sound Currency," but will do so shortly. I will send you every duplicate that I obtain, as I have buy orders out for any of these that can be found.

I am sending you under separate cover, a book entitled "The Scholars Arithmetic," by Daniel Adams, 1822. This item will cost you \$9.00, which I would like to see at once, if you want the book. The value of this work is the extensive references to the relative values of "Federal Money" and the money of various sections of the country. For instance, see page 80 and following pages. I think that this data is quite important.

Please let me have your thoughts, at your earliest convenience relative to the proposed Colonial and Continental paper venture.

Very best personal regards.

Sincerely,

  
John J. Ford, Jr.

JJF:dn

Eric P. Newman  
Numismatic Education Society  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

May 19, 1996

Dear Mr. Newman,

My name is Larry Lee and I am working on a Phd. in Museum Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I have been awarded a grant from the Early American Industrial Association to study the minting equipment and techniques used by early Colorado coiners. Specifically, I am researching the J. J. Conway coins, a project that I have been at for the past three years.

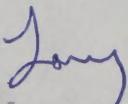
As you are undoubtedly aware, almost nothing has been published about J. J. Conway or his coins, the various dies attributed to him, or the two different sets of restrikes that have been made from Conway dies. During the course of my research, I have examined the Conway dies at the Colorado State Historical Society several times; I have also examined the set of Conway coins on loan to the ANA Museum, (which is the only complete set outside of the Smithsonian), I have obtained copies of both the Mumey and Bashlow restrikes and have visited the site of Parkville as well as visited all the libraries and museums of relevance. I have also interviewed many people with knowledge about the Conway coins, including Don and Abe Kagin, Mrs. V. Clain Stefanelli at the Smithsonian, John Ford, etc. To make a long story short, I have collected a lot of new information about the Conway coins, and have a manuscript of over 100 pages, which I hope to publish shortly.

Based on my research, I have come to view both the Bashlow die and the Conway \$5.00 "pattern" with growing suspicion. I believe it is probable that neither the die nor the pattern coin had anything to do with J. J. Conway and that both were manufactured after 1861. Mr. Robert Hoge at the ANA mentioned that you also believe the Conway pattern to be "fake". My purpose in writing you is to determine the specific objections you have to the authenticity of the Conway pattern piece and the Bashlow die.

Without expanding at this time on my reasons for believing these items to be of a suspicious nature, I wish you would be so kind as to tell me your reasons for doubting their authenticity. We can then compare notes; maybe we both noticed the same anomalies, or maybe there is something new for us both. My interest has to do with compiling as complete a picture of the J. J. Conway mint as possible. If the die and pattern are authentic, then they are legitimate, historical items that need to be included in the study; if they are fake, then that needs to be established as well.

I would be most interested in talking with you about some of these issues. Please contact me at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Lawrence J. Lee  
402-489-6208  
4020 Sumner St.  
Lincoln, NE 68506

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

Lawrence J. Lee  
4020 Summer St.  
Lincoln, NE 68506

May 28, 1996

Dear Mr. Lee:

J.J. Conway is a fine area of research for you to select. Congratulations.

The first thing I would like to know is the accessioning detail on the Colorado State Historical Society records. What does Mumey say?

I have never seen or studied those restrikes or dies. I have no opinion of the genuineness or otherwise of the die and I believe Bob Hogue is referring to other pioneer dies of which I do have an opinion.

What I know about ~~B~~ashlow is that he had hubs and transfer dies made from the original Confederate cent dies and struck his "restrikes" from those transfer dies. In this way he did not risk die breakage from coining. He was not unique in this transfer die restrike practice as it was often done before him.

If this is what you believe is a "fake" please let me know or do you believe the die design itself is entirely fake.

Perhaps you might send us a copy of your manuscript in its present form so we can see where we might be helpful. We will not disclose it.

We have done a substantial amount of research in some pioneer gold coin matters and some of it is in process now.

We can talk after a little ground work is done. My home telephone number is (314) 727-0850. My FAX is (314) 727-0820.

Good luck,



Eric P. Newman

DURHAM  
WESTERN  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM



Eric P. Newman  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

April 12, 1998

Dear Mr. Newman,

What a pleasure it was to speak with you on the telephone the other day. I look forward to meeting with you this coming Tuesday, May 19th. I will call you prior to that time to set up an exact time.

I have enclosed a broad outline of what is going to be the Byron Reed Gallery. The Gallery itself (c. 2,000 sq. ft.) will be comprised of three contiguous "rooms:" the Real Estate Office, the Main Gallery, and the Library. These rooms will actually all be in one large gallery, with different flooring, wall textures/colors, and placement of display cases signaling to the visitor they are entering a different area.

The Real Estate office will be a loosely-based rendition of Byron Reed's original real estate building located in downtown Omaha circa 1860. It will have a plank floor, some simple furniture and wood stove, and seven display panels on the walls. Each display panel covers one aspect of Byron Reed's life, as illustrated through various objects such as his original real estate license, a telegraph key, letters from Grover Cleveland, etc. No coins will be displayed in this area.

The largest section of the Gallery will be devoted to a display of the coins, medals, tokens and currency. Currently, we are looking at about twenty-two different wall panels, each covering a different aspect of numismatics (as represented in the Reed collection). The number in parenthesis on the outline sheet is the approximate number of coins that will be displayed at each section. About 10-15 coins will be displayed in the glass-(actually acrylic) paned enclosures; the remaining coins will be in drawers underneath the display panel. The visitor pulls open the (steel, alarmed) drawer and views (beneath acrylic glass) the coins resting in rows within the drawer. For example, we can have the ten or so best examples of sutler tokens on display for the casual visitor, while the serious coin buff can open the drawer and look at the other 80+ examples from the Reed collection.

The Library is a recreation of Reed's library. Here we enlarge the story of Reed the collector by demonstrating what it was like to collect coins or documents in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. This is where Reed's 1804 dollar and chant book, the two most important objects to him, will be displayed. This is also where the documents, books, pictures, autographs, and other paper objects from the collection will be shown. With the exception of the two treasure objects, the remainder of the items in this area will rotate after about one year.

"Collectors Corner" will be the last panel before the visitor exits the gallery. It basically poses the question "What do you collect?" and has a 3-month rotating display of a local collector's treasures. First up is a nice collection of Nebraska GAR material; three months later we have scheduled a fine collection of Omaha-area merchant tokens, then some Nebraska political badges, etc.

The final room is a Resource room (9' x 25') that will contain books (along two and one half walls) and equipment necessary for further research (along the other one and one half walls). We will have a digital scale with a readout to 1/1000th of a gram, a stereo-microscope, an ultrasonic cleaner, and other research aids. There will also be a computer with a database of the entire collection, plus chairs, desks and tables for coin club meetings or other small-group activities. The computer will link to other numismatic sites via the Internet.

An important part of the resource room will be the library, which currently consists of three main groups of books. The first, unavailable to the general public, are Byron Reed's numismatic books (about 120) plus all of his coin catalogs. These will be on display behind glass-doored bookcases.

The second part of the library consists of about \$1,500 worth of books I purchased in the past six months to catalog the collection (maybe another 40 books). These include the current edition of all the standard reference books as well as old standbys (Fuld, Coffee, Krause, Rulau, Schenkman, Pollack, Overton, Breen, etc., etc.). These may be used by the visitor while in the Resource Center, but may not be removed from the room.

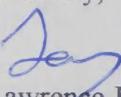
The third part of the library consists of about 300 numismatic books purchased from the University of Nebraska State Museum (natural history). These books are primarily on ancient and medieval coins and all date 1975 or earlier. It does contain 14 or so volumes of the British Museum series on ancient coins, which is the primary reason we purchased the collection. These also must be used in the Resource Center.

We will have approximately 180 shelf feet of book space, which is enough room for a couple of thousand books and journals. I have a much larger area available for storing additional books that are not used as often (like some dealer catalogs, etc.). I hope to build the library part up gradually to where I have a first-class numismatic library.

Hopefully this outline gives you an idea of what we are attempting to do here. I will explain everything in greater detail when we meet; these notes should start your ideas flowing.

Thank you again for agreeing to look at our ideas and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

  
Lawrence J. Lee  
Curator, the Byron Reed Collection

## Byron Reed Exhibit

### Real Estate Office

- A. Byron Reed the Man
  - L-1. the early years
  - L-2. BR as telegrapher
  - L-3. BR the abolitionist
  - L-4. BR as realtor and clerk
  - L-5. BR and Grover Cleveland
  - L-6. BR as husband and father
  - L-7. BR as philanthropist

### Main Gallery

- B. The Story of Money
  - M-1. Money through the ages (c. 100)
  - M-2. Minting and die making (c. 10)
  - M-3. Type collection (c. 50)
  - M-4. Patterns (325)
- C. American Coinage
  - M-5. Foreign coinage in early America (c. 50)
  - M-6. Colonial coins (122)
  - M-7. Early American Coinage (c. 150)
  - M-8. Federal Issue coins (c. 200)
  - M-9. Obsolete and future coinage (c. 20)
- D. American History
  - M-10. Military, Comm. and Peace medals (c. 400)
  - M-11. Commemorative coins (38)
  - M-12. Territorial gold pieces (51)
- E. Exonumia
  - M-13. Hard Time Tokens (59)
  - M-14. CW patriotics and store cards (230)
  - M-15. Sutler tokens (97)
  - M-16. Business tokens (90)
  - M-17. Nebraska Exonumia (10)
- F. Currency
  - M-18. Obsolete bank note (114)
  - M-19. Wildcat notes (438)
  - M-20. Fractional notes (39)
  - M-21. Confederate currency (68)
  - M-22. Foreign currency (19)

### Library

- G. Byron Reed as Collector
  - L-1. BR the collector
  - L-2. Assay Medal collection (38)
  - L-3. Byron Reed and the Assay Commission

L-4. Collector's Corner		
L-5. Books, Newspapers and Maps	drawer(s)	
L-6. Autographs, Photos, and Drawings	drawer(s)	
L-7. Miscellaneous rotating subjects		
L-8. Political tokens (100)	drawers	
L-9. Treasures (1804, chant book)	display case	highest security

#### **Resource Room**

- R-1. Computer
- R-2. Bookshelves
- R-3. Table
- R-4. Counter
- R-5. Cabinets

file: brexa.doc  
date: 5/12/98

Telephone 5/7/98

Harry Lee

~~402 444 5071~~ 402 444 5071  
402 444 5071 Western Heritage Society, Omaha  
res 402 489 6208

wants to come to see me on May 19, 1998

He visited St Louis 5/19/97 - Tom joined me at my home to discuss his museum problems in Omaha with the Reed collection. Spent all morning and lunch + some of afternoon talking about display technique, his political problems, coin history etc. He is getting a scale a screw press from the Gallery Hunt, a couple of from the Demarest Hunt and a die from Dr Phillips. He wrote an article on the Conway die and mentioned the Newcomer private gold collection. He knew Money. He goes to Gallery Hunt from time.

DURHAM  
WESTERN  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM



Eric P. Newman  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

June 2, 1998

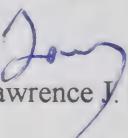
Dear Mr. Newman,

Thank you for giving so much of your time during my recent visit. I enjoyed meeting you and Tom and I can not tell you how much I learned from you both. I would be interested in receiving a summary of your suggestions for our Byron Reed exhibit. I think you both made several excellent points (acrylic sandwiched between glass; in-case lighting with 15w cool white fluorescent tubes, etc) that should be incorporated into our exhibit and having them formally outline on paper would make a nice summation.

I am enclosing a few articles relating to J. J. Conway and the Clark, Gruber mint for your files. I would of course welcome any insights you have after reading these pieces. I am assuming you were able to find the article on the discovery of the Conway dies in the June 1997 *Numismatist*; if not I can provide you with a copy of that as well.

Thank you again for your hospitality, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

  
Lawrence J. Lee

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

Theodore V. Buttrey  
6 De Freville Ave  
Cambridge CB4 1HR  
England

June 4, 1998

Air Mail

Dear Ted:

I recently had a visitor by the name of Lawrence Lee, curator of the Byron Reed Numismatic Collection in Omaha, Nebraska. He mentioned an article he wrote for the June 1997 Numismatist, a copy of which is enclosed. I was unaware of it and realized that you might be similarly unaware.

It should be of great interest to you that Conway transfer dies were openly made in or just prior to 1956 for the Denver Mint celebration from seven genuine Conway dies legitimately held by the Colorado Historical Society. Souvenir pieces in goldine were struck from the transfer dies and distributed.

By a twist of fate Franklin found an additional Conway die and a gold coin overstrike from it in an unidentified New Mexico antique shop which obtained them from another New Mexico site along with many U.S. gold coins in a burned out unidentified building on an unrecorded date. Ford obtained the die and coin from Franklin in an undocumented transaction and in 1957 (the year after the Denver celebration) sold the coin to Henry Clifford of California. The antique shop find was said to be 1955 so it appears that 2 years elapsed between the finding and the third party sale and those two years straddle the 1956 date of the Denver Mint souvenir delivery.

In the meantime Bashlow tries to have a transfer die made from the antique store die which Ford sold him and also had a special restrike die made up to go with it. Then Ford asserts that the antique store die seems fake. The antique store die happened to collapse along the way and messed up the situation. Your AJN article features the extensive appearance of previously unknown ingots during the same period.

I am going to discuss with Lee some of his conclusions, but in the meantime wanted to have you informed of this article and its sources.

I know you will be in New York in July. I will be at ANS on July 18, 1998 and hope our paths cross.

Ingot we trust,



Eric P. Newman

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

To: Kenneth Bressett

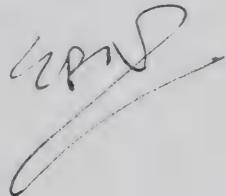
June 9, 1998

From: Eric P. Newman

You might consider eliminating the JJ Conway \$5 variety without numeral 5 on reverse if that is the one struck on a 1845 US Half Eagle. This is made from a die John Ford considers not original (the wrong fabric, whatever that means) according to the Larry Lee article.

Kagin is no help as he lists it on page 321 as a unique normal issue and on page 362 as a unique pattern, each being struck over a 1845 U.S. \$5 gold piece. Kagin is the unique one. The number of stars is not clear because he has a cloudy mind so the correct count is stated as "no 13 stars".

The coin was sold to Clifford but is not in the Clifford sale of 1982 and your Red Book says it was in the 1972 Marks sale.



sale to Clifford was in 1957

Red Book in which Marks sale is mentioned is 1983  
(perhaps there are others).



KENNETH BRESSETT  
POST OFFICE BOX 60145  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80960

June 29, 1998

Mr. Eric P. Newman  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

Dear Eric,

Thanks for your letter. The material that you keep finding on California gold is fantastic. I will put this in the "hold", file with other similar things. When you get here in a couple of weeks, we can talk about it.

I have no objection to removing the J.J. Conway \$5 variety without numeral 5 on the reverse. If JJF considers it bad, it must be really bad! It always seemed like a strange coin to me, but I have no evidence one way or another.

Bert told me that you called the other day when I was out. I appreciate the kind things you said about the Peace program. It looks as if this will really happen if Secretary Rubin goes along with his committee's recommendation. We will see when he gets back from China, and has time for such trivial things.

I think we are all set for the Summer Seminar. Uta will be here from the ANS (at my invitation), and things will run ok even without an Executive Director. The attendance will be larger than ever. It's hot and dry here just now. We are all looking forward to a grand affair.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken'.

Ken Bressett

DURHAM  
WESTERN  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM



Eric P. Newman  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

July 29, 1998

Dear Mr. Newman,

Thanks again for a great, great class! The three of you made a great teaching team and I feel lucky to have been in attendance. I was hoping to see you again in Portland to hand you this latest article on Conway, but it appears as if I will not be able to make the show. The Byron Reed political pot boiled over (again) while I was in Colorado and I will be needed on the home front to help get this exhibit opened by yesterday.

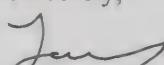
In it's current form, this article was submitted as part of a graduate class assignment in a Western U. S. history class I took a few years ago. It actually is the second chapter of a book I am researching on the Conway mint and makes a little more sense in the context of the book. However, the book is continually evolving as I learn new information about Conway, so I try and stay ahead of the game a bit by publishing those bits of the tale (like this piece and the one in the *Numismatist* last year) that are part of the finished story rather than the ongoing research.

Basically, this article is a review of the known literature on J. J. Conway. Q. David Bowers has offered to publish it in his "Little Editions" series, but I think I still needs work and am looking for outside eyes to review it. I would be honored by your editorial suggestions and comments. I have also given Ken Bressett a copy for his comments.

While in Colorado Springs I asked Dick Doty about the mysterious box John J. Ford supposedly gave the Smithsonian with instructions not to open it for 50. Dick said he too had heard that rumor but after checking all the Museum's records and searching about, he has never been able to find the box or any trace of it. This must be one of those rumors that are based more on imagination than fact.

Thanks again for reviewing this article for me, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Lawrence J. Lee  
Associate Curator

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

August 19, 1998

Mr. Lawrence J. Lee  
Durham Western Heritage Museum  
801 South 10th Street  
Omaha, NE 68108-3299

**RE: J.J. Conway**

Dear Larry:

Thank you for the nice remarks about the ANA Summer Conference class. The teachers learned as much as the students.

As to your J.J. Conway project, I enclose copies of correspondence from John J. Ford, Jr. to me dated October 26, 1962 and November 6, 1962, and my intermediate reply dated October 30, 1962. I believe these will be of great interest to you. You will note the statement "Bashlow has unearthed an obverse die."

As to your July 26, 1998 draft of "A Historiographic Review of the J.J. Conway Mint," I want to talk to you about it. It may be too critical. Is there a way you can have an existing example of the coin nondestructively tested? Then you might have something important to add.

I am sorry you were unable to be in Portland as it was delightful for many of us.

My best,

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

EPN:bv

DURHAM  
WESTERN  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM



Eric P. Newman  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

August 25, 1998

Dear Mr. Newman,

Thank you for sharing the letters between you and John J. Ford about the Bashlow restrike. It clears up a few things even while it makes some other points even more obscure.

As you pointed out, Ford's statement that "Bashlow has unearthed an obverse die" is worded in such a way that it conceals Ford's role in the discovery of the die and "pattern" coin. Why would he wish to hide his part in the story? While there are several nefarious reasons why he may have chosen to do so, there could also be a valid explanation for him hiding his role, and without asking him about the point, I could give him the benefit of the doubt if that were the only problem with this account. Unfortunately, there are other apparent mis-statements that lead me to think that not all has been told here.

His statement that "the die had a peculiar buckle" also seems somewhat misleading in that the buckle was not there on the original die he sold Bashlow, but was caused at the Frank Co. when they tried to make a transfer die from the "original" New Mexico die. Since Ford knew (and has stated as much to me) the die buckle came from this unsuccessful attempt to make a transfer die, he again seems to be slanting the story toward a particular conclusion.

The most egregious statement comes a few sentences later: "I have examined this obverse die and know that it is authentic." I have a different quote from the same year (quoted in my article) where he says he knows the die is not that used to strike the Conway \$5.00. So which is it, the real die or a fake one? It is so obviously fake that I can't believe anyone, especially someone with Ford's stature at the time as a protege of the great Walter Breen, would even attempt to try and convince people the Bashlow/Silver City die was that used to strike the J. J. Conway \$5 piece. Its not even a very good facimile of the real thing!

I maintain that there is no missing obverse die "from the set of Conway dies in the Colorado State Historical Society." Rather, I think I can demonstrate that the \$5 Liberty head die dated 1862 in that museum is the same die used in striking the (1861) obverse, with the original obverse ground off and the new image engraved on the ground-down die.

Regarding my article on the historiography of the Conway mint: I am most anxious to hear your comments. I would be happy to call you but because of your busy schedule I am not sure you would have time to talk just because I happened to call. I suggest you call me here at the museum (402-444-5071) when you have a few minutes to talk during regular business hours. I am generally here 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. Otherwise, I would be happy to call you at your home at a certain time when you know you will be around.

Points of future conversation should include your reasons for thinking the article may be too critical and any suggests you may have for its improvement. I am unclear as to why you mentioned testing an example of a Conway coin in the context of a literature review, unless you are referring to the "without alloy" discussion. I would also like to hear your views as to whether or not to allow Q. David Bowers to publish this piece. Was it you or Ken who said he (Bowers) was trying to lock up the publishing rights to everything out there? (Incidentally, Ken is also reviewing the article).

Finally, you of all people should appreciate the irony of my article on the Conway dies winning the Wayte Raymond Memorial Literary Award, since the award is sponsored by John. J. Ford, Jr. What made it particularly ironic was the sidebar accompanying the article that questions the provenance of the Bashlow die. No wonder Ford asked Barbara Gregory to not print the article!

Talk to you soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry".

DURHAM  
WESTERN  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM



9-30-98

Eric,  
Thanks for looking at this. Please  
let me know if you have any suggestions.  
Thanks

Long

# A Historiographical Review of the J. J. Conway Mint

9/30/98

## Introduction

Before the practice was declared illegal in 1864, at least forty different companies privately minted gold coins in the United States. Between 1828 and 1862, private mints played an important economic role in the mining frontier by alleviating a shortage of circulating coinage and by providing a standardized specie in a booming local economy based upon raw bullion. While the history of these various mints has been only incompletely recorded, none of the private coiners are as enigmatic as the firm of J. J. Conway & Co.

The Conway mint is believed to be the last company to legally produce privately-issued gold coins in the United States. A few coins in each denomination (\$2.50, \$5.00 and \$10.00 gold pieces) still exist, mostly in museum collections.<sup>1</sup> Information about the company itself has been described as "very meager,"<sup>2</sup> with "some doubt being expressed such a mint ever operated in Colorado."<sup>3</sup>

In presenting the history of the Conway mint, historians and other commentators have generally relied upon the same few primary and secondary sources, and accounts of the mint's activities are reduced to the few known facts. The entry in the current "Red Book" is a good summation of the Conway mint, as presently understood:

J. J. CONWAY & COMPANY, Georgia Gulch, Colorado, 1861 Records show that the Conway Mint operated for a short while in 1861. As in all gold mining areas the value of gold dust caused disagreement

<sup>1</sup> Only three Conway \$10.00 coins are known; two of these are in the Lily Collection within the Smithsonian Institute. Of the five \$5.00 pieces, three are in private hands, while four of the seven known \$2.50 coins are also in private collections.

<sup>2</sup> Whiteley, Philip. "Western Necessity Coinage" *The Westerner's Brand Book*, Denver Posse, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Adams, Edgar, *Adam's Official Premium List of United States Private and Territorial Gold Coins*, 1909 (reprinted 1977 by Willett Press, New York), p 69.

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

among the merchants and the miners. The firm of J. (John) J. Conway & Co. solved this difficulty by bringing out gold pieces in August, 1861.<sup>4</sup>

It is the contention of this paper that this and other summaries unwittingly perpetuate an incomplete and incorrect view of the Conway mint. As will be shown, a careful historiographic examination of the primary and secondary sources used in adducing the Conway history reveals that most commentaries are directly or indirectly based upon an flawed account of Conway written thirty-four years after the described events. These histories are thus of limited value in that they not only fail to add anything new to the Conway story, they in fact take the same information and uncritically present it anew with each retelling.

This paper will examine how this situation arose by looking at contemporary newspaper reports about the Conway mint and subsequent commentary in both the historical and numismatic literature.

### Primary Sources

There are but three contemporary accounts of the minting of the J. J. Conway coins, all published in the weekly *Rocky Mountain News* late in the summer of 1861. Because of the importance of these comments, they are reproduced in full below:

We have been furnished with the result of a careful assay lately made in this city, of a new coin of the denomination of five dollars, issued by J. J. Conway & Co., of Georgia Gulch. The assay shows that the fineness of the gold is only .722 1/2, and the value of the 'slug' in American coin \$4.26. These slugs may prove a matter of convenience to the miners for home circulation, but in the Eastern market they probably would not bring four dollars. In manufacturing private coin for circulation in this region, our bankers should adopt a standard approximating that of U.S. coin. Clark, Gruber & Co.'s coins is nearly if not quite up to this standard, and any of our miners who are lucky enough to carry East a pocket full of Denver mint drops need not fear much loss.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Yeoman, R. S. *A Guide Book of United States Coins*, 48rd Edition, Western Publishing Co., Racine, WI 1995, p. 284.

<sup>5</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 13, 1861, under article "A New Coinage."

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

This is the first recorded mention of J. J. Conway & Co. and his mint. The "& Co." would seem to indicate that Conway had partners in his operation, though this is by no means certain. The article falsely states that both the J. J. Conway and Clark, Gruber & Co. coins contained less than \$5.00 worth of gold.

It is hard to judge how damaging this initial report was to Conway in his attempts to pass his coins, but as will be seen, it was sufficiently threatening for him to have his coins independently re-assayed to counteract the false account. In point of fact, honest minters like J. J. Conway or Clark, Gruber & Co. always included more gold in their coin's metallic content than their official United States counterpart. This loophole in the Federal counterfeiting law allowed private minters to exist as long as their half-eagle coin had more than \$5.00 worth of gold.

The next mention of Conway comes a few days later, by a different reporter. It is included in an account of a tour of the Breckenridge and Georgia Gulch areas:

There is a mint in Georgia Gulch, conducted by J. J. Conway & Co., jewelers and bankers. Their machinery seems to be as fine as that of Clark, Gruber & Co., and their five- and ten-dollar gold pieces like as nice and rich as Uncle Sam himself could get up.<sup>6</sup>

This is an important quote for several reasons. First, it is the only contemporary report that says the J. J. Conway & Co. were jewelers as well as bankers. As used in this period, the term "jewelers" meant more than someone who could repair the miner's pocketwatches. A jeweler would also have the knowledge, skill, and more importantly, the tools to serve as engraver, assayer, and/or metallurgist. Assaying was a respected profession and denoted a certain sense of honesty and stability. Quite often a jeweler/assayer would have some formal education beyond that of the common miner, who was often just a displaced farmer. In an area of incredible metal riches, a person who could quantitatively determine the worth of a particular rock was accorded a certain amount of prestige and respect.

The fact that the man J. J. Conway was a jeweler, as well as a banker, assayer and minter, would seem to indicate an older man with experience in several different lines of work. We might also expect him to be somewhat self-sufficient and economically stable to conceive, organize and transport his operation across half a continent.

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<sup>6</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 17, 1861, in article titled "From the Southern Mines".

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

The second point to be gleaned from this report is the fact that Conway's coins, as well as his minting machinery, were perceived to be on par with that of Clark, Gruber & Co.'s. Since Rocky Mountain News reporters had reported extensively on the grand opening of that company the year before,<sup>7</sup> and had closely followed the growing enterprise in the meantime, it is assumed the reporter was familiar enough with the coining process to make a valid comparison. If this is the case, then Conway must have used the same "new-fangled," steam-powered minting equipment as used in the Clark, Gruber mint.<sup>8</sup> And if this is so, then the very existence of such a technologically complex manufacturing process located on the very edge of the latest gold strike represented a concerted effort by Conway & Co. that required a great deal of prior preparation and planning.

Finally, no mention is made in this report of the \$2.50 gold pieces. Was this due to an oversight on the part of the reporter or was it because that denomination had not yet been struck? While we do not yet know for certain the answer to this question, later evidence seems to indicate that Conway had not yet begun minting his quarter-eagle piece.

Almost six weeks after publishing their first, false report, the News offers a correction, if not an apology, to Conway:

The coinage of gold in Colorado Territory is getting to be quite a large business. Besides the extensive establishments of Clark, Gruber & Co., in this city, there is a mint in Georgia Gulch, and another in Tarryall, besides a number of assayists in different mining towns, who refine gold and run it into bars. The gold is usually coined as it comes from the earth, without alloy, except what it naturally contains. All of it contains more-or-less silver, and it consequently varies much in value. As the silver is allowed to remain in the coins, of course they vary somewhat, but to guard against loss, the coiners have adopted the plan of making their coins somewhat heavier than those of the United States of the same denominations. Some of Clark, Gruber & Co.'s five dollar pieces weigh from fifteen to eighteen grains heavier than United States half eagles.

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<sup>7</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, July 25, 1860.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the Conway minting equipment, see the author's article "J. J. Conway" in the April 14, 1997 issue of *Coin World*.

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

We have several times heard complaints respecting the coinage of J. J. Conway & Co., Bankers, of Georgia Gulch. It having been represented that their coins were of light weight and deficient in value, but an assay made of a five-dollar piece recently, by Mr. Perrenaud of this city, establishes their value and fineness. We have been permitted to copy his certificate, and publish it herewith:

"This is to certify that I have this day assayed one gold piece stamped "Pike's Peak," "Five Dollars," "J. J. Conway & Co., Bankers" which weighed 9.117 milligrams, equal to 140.30 grains troy. Fineness: gold .922 thousandths, silver .78 thousandths. This piece is worth in United States coin \$5.01--silver included".  
T. G. Perrenaud, Assayer. Denver, Sept. 14, 1861.<sup>9</sup>

William Byers, long-time editor of the News, was being disingenuous when he noted that complaints about the Conway coins had been heard, since he and his paper were the primary source of those false reports! This is hardly the only instance of Byers and the News coming out with incorrect or negative information about a person or event, only to have to retract their mistake in a later edition. Byers also glosses over the fact that Thomas Perrenaud, the man who conducted the assay of the Conway coins, was the official Assayer of Denver City. As such, Perrenaud's endorsement carried with it a sort of official blessing that would supersede the report of the first assayist.

Note that Perrenaud's report was dated September 14th, 1861. The negative report in the News had appeared on August 13, just over a month before. During this period, the Conway's coins would have been regarded by many miners as suspect and it was in the Company's immediate interest to have a second, official assay made of their coins as soon as possible to re-establish the worth of their coin in the marketplace. Conway or one of his co-workers evidently traveled the eighty miles to Denver, carrying samples of the coins for Perrenaud to assay. Despite the favorable outcome of the second assay, the damage had apparently been done, as no further contemporary accounts of the Conway mint are known.

While the three newspaper reports have been squeezed for every last bit of information possible, the omissions in these early accounts are significant: nowhere, for instance, is J. J. Conway called John; the site of the mint is always given as Georgia Gulch, never Parkville; the time of minting of the \$2.50 pieces is left unanswered, and the man himself is never interviewed or profiled for information about his personal history.

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<sup>9</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 24, 1861, under article titled "Gold Coinage."

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

Especially noteworthy is the fact that no mention is made about any supposed disagreements over the value of gold dust being solved by Conway, as per the accepted history of the mint.

Besides these few newspaper accounts, no further mention regarding the Conway minting operation or J. J. Conway the man could be located in contemporary Colorado historical records.<sup>10</sup>

### Later Historical Commentary

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Coloradoans became aware of the need to write down the early history of the Territory while the pioneers were still around to tell their stories. To fill the gap, writing histories of Colorado became a mission for a generation of authors. Written with all the fervor and boosterism that typified the era, these massive works contain a staggering amount of minutia that both fascinates and overwhelms the reader.<sup>11</sup>

The next round of commentary about the Conway mint comes against the backdrop of these state, regional and local histories. These later reports contain several significant new details about the Conway mint not noted in the contemporary records of the previous generation. Because none of these new details are attributed by the later authors nor mentioned in the contemporary accounts of thirty years before, one can only assume the additional information comes from interviews and other personal recollections by people who used the coins or remembered something about J. J. Conway and his mint in Georgia Gulch. In other words, oral history and personal recollections; treacherous ground where one must step carefully in searching for historiographical accuracy.

### The Hall Quote

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<sup>10</sup> Consulted records include the *American Genealogical Biographical Index*, the 1860, 1870 and 1880 U. S. Census for Colorado Territory, the *Colorado Business Directory* (1864-1900), and the *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Denver Daily Times*, the *Denver Post*, or the *Tarryall Miner's Record* for the years in question. Records and files were also checked at the Colorado Historical Society, the Western Collection of the Denver Public Library, and the land dealings, mining claims and museum records of Summit County, Colorado, where the Conway mint was located.

<sup>11</sup> These mighty tomes of tiny type include Frank Hall's four-volume *The History of the State of Colorado* (1895); Jerome Smiley's 978-page *History of Denver* (1901); the four-volume *History of Colorado* (1918) by William Stone, and Baker and Halen's five-volume *History of Colorado* (1927).

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

One of the earliest, longest, and most quoted of these passages comes from Frank Hall's four-volume History of the State of Colorado in a discussion on the development of Georgia Gulch:

As soon as practicable after the establishment of mining camps, barrels of whisky (sic) were brought in and saloons opened. Gold brokers, merchants, traders, hotel keepers and other accessories followed in quick succession. An attempt being made by the traders to rate the value of gold at \$14 or \$16 per ounce, the miners held a meeting and settled the question by resolving not to deal with any man who refused to take it at \$18. Next, the traders claimed the privilege of cleaning the dust in the "blower" before weighing, but all such controversies were quickly disposed of by a firm named Conway & Co., who coined the native gold into slugs without alloy, in denominations of \$5, bearing the name of the firm. These slugs passed current as five dollar gold coins do now. The edges were milled like any other coin and passed freely in all exchanges.<sup>12</sup>

This report adds several new items of information to the story of Conway, including the information that the slugs "passed freely in all exchanges". Despite the additional details, Hall does not mention either the \$2.50 or the \$10.00 gold pieces, and also refers to the mint as "Conway and Co." rather than "J. J. Conway & Co." as on the coins themselves. The edges of the \$2.50 and \$10.00 coins were in fact not reeded ("milled"), further proof that Hall did not have access to actual coins in writing his description.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, details of the events surrounding the minting of the Conway coins were already fading from collective memory.

The gist of this passage from Hall shows up repeatedly in subsequent commentaries about the Conway coins, either quoted directly or restated with slightly different wording. For instance, Adam's comments in 1909 and Kagin's observations in 1981:

Early in September, 1861, a meeting of the miners and traders was held in order to establish a uniform rate at which gold dust should be current; at the time, this commodity ranged in value from \$14 to \$16

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<sup>12</sup> Hall, Vol. IV, p. 328.

<sup>13</sup> It is little wonder that Hall did not have a Conway coin to examine, as at the time of his writing the \$2.50 piece sold in the Clemens sale of 1878 was the only known Conway coin.

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

per ounce. A disagreement occurred between the miners and the traders as to the rate, which promised a deadlock, when the firm of Conway & Co. solved the difficulty by manufacturing their gold pieces.<sup>14</sup>

Soon after the establishment of the mining camps in Georgia Gulch, traders began streaming into the settlement loaded with barrels of whiskey and other goods to sell to the miners. An attempt was made by these traders to rate the value of gold at \$14 to \$16 per ounce, but the miners refused to deal with anyone who would not accept gold at \$18 per ounce. The controversy was solved just before August, 1861, when J. J. (John) Conway & Co., jewelers and bankers in Georgia Gulch, offered to coin the native gold into \$2 1/2, \$5, and \$10 gold pieces.<sup>15</sup>

The Adams quote appeared in the first systematic attempt at cataloging the various private territorial gold coins and is quite obviously taken directly from Hall's History of Colorado.<sup>16</sup> Adams' book consequently became a standard numismatic reference work, which meant in turn this quote was uncritically propagated by later numismatic researchers.

The Kagin quote, which also is clearly based on Adams/Hall, is important for several reasons. First, Kagin's book was actually part of his Ph.D. dissertation and is the longest and most recent treatment of the Conway mint in the numismatic literature. By longest it is meant that Kagin's treatment of Conway totals nine paragraphs, two of which are Rocky Mountain News quotes as reproduced above. The other seven paragraphs contain no new information other than Kagin's suggestion of J(ohn) as the meaning of one of the J's in Conway's name.<sup>17, 18</sup> Thus,

<sup>14</sup> Adams, Edgar, *Adam's Official Premium List of United States Private and Territorial Gold Coins*, 1909 (reprinted 1977 by Willett Press, New York). Whiteley quotes this Adams quote verbatim without attribution in his 1948 work on Necessity Coinage (*op.cit.*).

<sup>15</sup> Kagin, Donald. *Private Gold Coins and Patterns of the United States*. p. 223.

<sup>16</sup> Here may be as good a place as any to mention that Hall's history of Colorado, despite its bulk, is lightly regarded by serious historians. Although given high marks for its ease of reading, the work is known to be replete with errors, of which the Conway story may be just another.

<sup>17</sup> Two different men named "Jno. Conway" are listed in the 1860 U.S. Census Report. Kagin assumed without further research (personal communication) that one of these men may have been the J. J. Conway who minted coins in Georgia Gulch. While space does not allow an expansion of the entire argument against this supposition, the author has tracked both of these men through their subsequent lives in Colorado and determined that neither man's middle initial was J and that they had nothing to do with minting coins in the 1860s.

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

both the earliest and latest commentary about Conway in the numismatic literature is taken in large measure from a single passage by a suspect author.

Hall's original 1895 passage is interesting in that it presents for the first time a historical context behind the minting of Conway's coins. Many later commentator re-tell the original story with added detail, as seen above. Unfortunately, Hall statement is misleading and some of the additional information merely compounds an already flawed account.

According to Hall, we have a sequence of events that go something like this: the miners have a meeting about the value of gold dust where they agree not to deal with anyone who refuses to trade gold at less than \$18 per ounce. "Next" says Hall, "the traders claimed the privilege of cleaning the dust". This seems to be in response to the miners action. Conway then steps in with his compromise coinage and solves the problem. The implication is that Conway made his coins as a result of the miner's meeting. A closer examination of events during this period indicate this can hardly be the case.

In the spring of 1861, the price of gold was a hotly contested issue throughout Colorado Territory. Miner's wanted it priced at \$18 per ounce, while businessmen would offer as little as \$12 for "dirty" gold. The first recorded meeting between miners and merchants to establish a standardized price for gold occurred in Central City on April 29, 1861.<sup>19</sup> The meeting's outcome was a resolution by the businessmen that they would only accept gold dust at certain rates, depending on the locale from which the gold came. Thus, Clear Creek gold would be accepted at \$17 per ounce, Russell Gulch gold at \$16, etc.

Just a few days later, on May 3, the Denver City Chamber of Commerce accepted the Central City figures and fixed the price they would accept for placer gold from other locales besides the Central City region. This included setting the price for the placer gold from the Blue River Mining District, where Parkville and Georgia Gulch were located. In reports of this meeting, Georgia Gulch gold is specifically mentioned as being worth only \$16 per ounce, while Humbug Gulch gold was supposedly worth \$17.<sup>20</sup> Since the town of Parkville was situated

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<sup>18</sup> Despite its many important contributions as the most thorough book on privately issued gold coins, Kagan's book contains several errors regarding Colorado minters. These errors vary in degree of magnitude, from minor (p. 218 says the earliest listing of the Denver City Assay Office token was Scott's Coin Catalog of 1893; actually, it was Banks & Co.'s 1886 catalog); to the significant (p. 371 lists \$5.00 Conway restrike as having a plain edge, when it is in fact reeded); to the major (p. 240 misidentifies Clark, Gruber & Co.'s minting equipment as a screw press rather than steam-powered).

<sup>19</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, May 8, 1861.

<sup>20</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, May 22, 1861.

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at the point where Humbug Gulch and Georgia Gulch met, this meant that under the proposed system, gold from the same area was essentially given two different prices.

Tying the price of gold to its locale was not a great idea, but the most vigorous opposition from miners and mill owners came because the entire plan amounted simply to a reduction in the price paid for gold. The system did not work, businessmen were gradually forced to give way, and soon the old prices were current again.

The point is that the Central City and Denver City resolutions, which impacted the entire Territory, sound suspiciously like the events described by Hall as occurring at that very time in Parkville. These events in turn produced the events that were supposedly "solved" by Conway's coins. But when Conway minted his coins in 1861, the Clark, Gruber, & Co. mint had already been in operation for over a year! The problem of coining the dust into specie had already been largely met by the Denver company's wildly successful and well-publicized bank and minting facility in downtown Denver City. In other words, the linkage between the miner's meeting and Conway's coins may be more in Hall's combining several events into a single paragraph than a reflection of the actual motivating factors behind Conway minting his coins.

In Hall's original quote, no date is given for the miner's meeting, though he does say it was the result of events that occurred "...soon...after the establishment of the mining camps." This would include not only Parkville, but the entire "Pikes Peak"<sup>21</sup> area, which was covered with scores of mining camps beginning in 1858. The Georgia Gulch area was discovered in 1860, and Parkville was in full swing by May of 1861. During that month, the post office, general store, a warehouse, the saw mill and the Masonic Hall, to name just a few establishments, were all newly dedicated or under construction. This is in addition to the other commercial enterprises like the saloons and hotel which date to the previous year. Obviously, by May of 1861, commercial activity and the miner's fortunes would have been far enough advanced for friction over value to arise, yet no "miner's meeting" is known for the town other than in the context of the Hall quote.<sup>22</sup>

Hall also mentions that "gold brokers" (plural) were among the first entrepreneurs to arrive in the gold fields. Besides J. J. Conway & Co., however, no other assayer, broker or bank is known for the entire Georgia Gulch area (home to some 20,000 miners), whereas many are known for other towns in Colorado at the time. This

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<sup>21</sup> It would actually be another 25 years before the big deposits of gold on Pikes Peak were discovered.

<sup>22</sup> The records for Parkville and the surrounding George Gulch mining area are located in the Summit County Courthouse, Breckenridge, Colorado. One of the early mining ledgers has a bullet hole that passes through the entire book.

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

would either seem to place Conway in Parkville prior to the miner's meeting (in which case he can hardly be solving a problem that has not yet occurred) or be another instance of Hall speaking generically about events in the region while discussing Georgia Gulch in particular.

Adams, quoted above, stated that the meeting was held "early in September, 1861." This clearly is in error, as the newspaper reports mentioning the Conway pieces had already been published in August. Knowing the Conway coins were already circulating, Kagin says the problem was solved "just before August 1861," antedating the minting of the coins to July.

This still does not totally solve the problem, as even under the best of circumstances it would take a minimum of five or six months to obtain the dies and minting equipment necessary for striking coins. For instance, it is known that the Clark, Gruber & Co.'s dies and minting equipment took five months to reach Denver once the purchase orders were placed for them in Philadelphia. So if the Conway's coins were circulating in June and July 1861, it was only because he had the idea to mint them months before then and had arranged for the necessary machinery and dies to be shipped to Colorado. And while it is possible Conway's equipment, ordered months before, did arrive just in time to solve a local crisis over the value of gold dust, Hall's account of the incident is clearly based on secondary sources and may telescope regional events into a local setting. Clearly, J. J Conway conceived and designed his coins long before any miner's meeting, local or regional, forced the issue.

In fact, allowing five months for Conway's idea of striking coins in the newly discovered gold fields to reach fruition, and assuming he could not cross the Plains during the winter of 1860, implies that Conway conceived the idea of minting coins before Parkville and Georgia Gulch were even discovered; his ideas could hardly "solve" a problem in a town that was not yet built, and Hall's comments are clearly incorrect.

Another mis-statement by Hall is the observation that the Conway coins are minted of native gold "without alloy". This is somewhat confusing; placer gold (which is what was being mined in Georgia Gulch and was the source of the gold in Conway's coins) always contains a mixture of various metals that serve as a natural alloy: silver or copper for example. In other words, there is no such thing a "pure" placer gold.

So by "without alloy", does Hall mean Conway smelted off these naturally occurring alloys, making his coins out of 24-carat pure gold? Or does he mean that he took the gold dust straight from the miner's poke and melted it down without adding any additional alloys to control the hardness and value of the coin? Which ever way he meant it, the statement is incorrect.

In the minting process utilized by Clark & Gruber, the coin planchets were punched out of a quarter-inch thick strip of gold, the exact fineness and alloy content of which had been carefully predetermined and

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

monitored. Clark, Gruber coins, as well as the Conway coins, always contained more value in gold than their U.S. counterparts; that was the loophole in existing minting laws that allowed private gold pieces to be made without them being deemed counterfeit by the government. In other words, the Conway coins did indeed have an alloy content, contrary to Hall's statement.

In summary then, it seems that Frank Hall's quote, from which most information about the Conway coins has been deduced, is in error in several points despite the additional information it supplies. Furthermore, these errors are continued in the historical record as each subsequent author treats the previous commentary as valid.

### Other Historical Comments

There are but two further comments on the Conway coins that are of interest in our review of the historical literature. The first was written almost seventy years after the minting of any of the coins mentioned:

The Clark and Gruber mint was the most successful institution of its kind in the West. There were two others in Colorado, however; one was the mint of Dr. John Parsons, which was started in 1861. Little is known of Doctor Parsons. He is reported to have come into South Park from Quincy, Illinois. He coined \$2.50 and \$5.00 gold pieces. His mint was at Hamilton, in South Park. Another mint was that of J. J. Conway and Company. The coins struck by this mint circulated quite freely for a time, and then gradually disappeared.<sup>23</sup>

This account is also clearly based on oral sources. The comment that "little is known of Dr. Parsons" is puzzling in that Parsons wrote at least one book and was a semi-prominent figure in Denver and Park City, Utah until his death in 1881.<sup>24</sup> If little was known of Parsons just a few years after his death, how much less was known of J. J. Conway, who disappeared twenty years earlier.

The significant portion of this statement is that the Conway coins "circulated quite freely for a time, and then gradually disappeared." From the Hall quote above we learned that the coins circulated "freely;" Baker and Halen

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<sup>23</sup> Baker and Halen, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 880.

<sup>24</sup> Dr. Parsons' obituary was published in the *Denver Daily Times*, Jan. 28, 1881. See also Young, Edwin. "Dr. John D. Parsons: A Colorado Pioneer," *The Numismatist*, Sept. 1983. Parsons actually had his headquarters at Tarryall, rather than Hamilton.

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

use the same term (indicating they too may have used Hall as a source) and add the comment about "gradually" disappearing from circulation. This seems to indicate the coins were initially accepted by both miners and traders, but that gradually they were withdrawn from circulation through redemption, melting, keepsakes or hoarding, until after some period of time they were no longer used in business transactions and "disappeared."

This view must be contrasted against an 1862 quote by Father John Dyers. Dyers was a well-known traveling minister who was nicknamed the "Snowshoe Itinerant" for his mid-winter rounds of the mining camps. He recalled:

I reached Georgia Gulch on the second day of April, (1862) and was received kindly...There was a friendly Jew...who proposed to raise the preacher something, and took a paper and collected \$22.50 in dust; for that was all the currency then. This amount was quite a help, as there were only ten cents in my purse when I got there.<sup>25</sup> (italics supplied)

Here we have one of the few quotes regarding Parkville from the Spring of 1862 and the Conway coins seem to already have disappeared from circulation. The Dyers quote indicates that gold dust remained the medium of exchange in Parkville, at least among church-goers, less than six months later. Did the Conway coins disappear gradually from circulation as the Baker and Halen quote indicates? Or did they disappear quickly, as the Dyers passage implies?<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusions

Most of the attention paid to Colorado coins in the numismatic literature has focused on the Clark, Gruber & Co. pieces. These coins were minted in much greater numbers, and were more widely accepted and better documented in the historical record than the coins from either the Parsons or Conway mint. When the J. J.

---

<sup>25</sup> Dyers, John Lewis *Snowshoe Itinerant* , 1891.

<sup>26</sup> This brings up the larger issue of how many Conway coins were minted and how widely they circulated. While this topic is beyond the scope of this present paper, it is interesting to note that one of the three known Conway \$10 pieces and two of the seven known \$2.50 were discovered at Ft. Union, New Mexico. Ft. Union was the staging ground for the Colorado Volunteers, the Territorial pro-Union militia raised among the men in the mining camps that fought Gen. Henry Sibley's 1862 Confederate invasion of New Mexico. Evidently a member of Company G, which was raised in the Georgia Gulch area, carried some Conway coins along with him to the Civil War.

## Historiography of J. J. Conway

Conway coins are mentioned (and they are surprisingly omitted from several important works on private gold coinage<sup>27</sup>), it seems to be more in an attempt by the author to be inclusive, rather than any effort to break new ground. Usually the treatment given the Conway coins is a rewrite (or a verbatim, unattributed quote, see Whiteley in "Western Necessity Coinage"<sup>28</sup>) of Adams' 1909 synopsis, which is itself a rewrite of Hall's 1895 work!

The reason there is so little known about the J. J. Conway mint is that there are almost no facts available.<sup>29</sup> The few clues there are to be found are based on written and verbal accounts that have been misrepresented (Byers), mis-stated (Hall), and retold so many times there seems little left for further speculation.

Returning to the "Red Book" quote, we can clearly see at least two elements of Hall's basic storyline: the miner/merchant disagreement and the August date for the minting of the coins. Even the first sentence, that the mint only operated for a short while, is somewhat misleading, since the foresight and planning of the Conway operation surely took more than "a short while." Future commentators about the Conway mint may wish to include the growing body of information about J. J. Conway the man as well as noting the historical relevance of the Civil War to his coinage designs for the 1862 season. They should also include the fact that the Conway coins were the last private gold issues to be legally minted in the United States.

The implication of this historiographic analysis is that the history of the Conway mint needs to be totally re-examined. New primary sources should be sought in Civil War and other government records outside of Colorado. Much less reliance should be placed on secondary sources and areas of confusion should be re-examined to find the best possible explanation of events. Finally, the Conway dies, coins, and coin provenance's should likewise be carefully examined for clues. They are the actual, physical, concrete proof that Conway and his mint were more than a few lines of type on a spool of microfilm in the basement of some archive. The coins and dies exist and their existence, along with a renewed search for primary records, may provide several more clues about J. J. Conway and his Territorial mint.

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<sup>27</sup> Neither R. F. Yeoman's "Gold Rush Private Coinage" (*Whitman Numismatic Journal*, March, 1964) nor Philip Whiteley's "Colorado Specie" (*The Numismatist*, July, 1958) mention the Conway coins or mint.

<sup>28</sup> Whiteley in "Western Necessity Coinage," *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Since this article was written, several tantalizing leads have converged to indicate that J. J. Conway may possibly be an engraver named Joseph J. Conway from Salem, Massachusetts.

p. 1 line 4. Tone down this criticism. It even undermines your own prize ~~to money~~ winning article.

p. 1 Footnote 1. Lelly is misspelled.

p. 2 Footnote 4. The citation is obsolete. Is it in the 1999 Red Book which is available.

p. 3 the quote. Is this word "like" supposed to be "look"? If not put "sic" next to the word.

p. 3 miners showed to miners'

p. 4 footnote 8, give the page number.

p. 7 ~~He~~ Hall ~~didn't~~ was correct that the #5 was needed on the edge, so whether he saw a coin or not he was right. Hall could have had an informant who knew a lot or told him a lot.

p. 8 Kogin's book is not the most recent piece of numismatic literature - your piece is. Inc means Jonathan as well as John.

p. 9 Don't say "suspect ~~the~~ author" about anybody. You can indicate he shows no support for his statement. miners<sup>3</sup> not miners<sup>2</sup> miners<sup>(line 11)</sup> not miners<sup>(line 10)</sup> A screw press can be steam-powered. (Note 18) as was Boulton's, but probably you are right. There may be a .#5 plain edge restrike.

p. 10 Miners not Spener's<sup>3</sup> (line 13)

p. 10 miners is wrong in several places & beyond

p. 11 ~~He~~ Planchets could not be punched out of  $\frac{1}{4}$ " strip. the strip had to be rolled first to proper thickness before planchet cutting.

p.13 line 11 where are the italics?

p.14 You undercut your entire article by naming Joseph J Conway and giving no data on him after finding several leads.

You must cite your own article and other similar writings.

Eric

I hope I have been helpful. The struggle between miners with gold dust and shopkeepers is customary. Each tries to improve his deal. The clever ones to make a living out of converting the gold dust into coin.



# BOWERS AND MERENA GALLERIES, INC.

*Your friends in the rare coin business*

April 9, 1999

Mr. Kenneth E. Bressett and  
Mr. Eric P. Newman

Dear Ken and Eric:

This is a letter I am sending to each of you—the purpose being to enclose a letter from Larry Lee, curator of the Byron Reed Collection. I do not recall having met Larry personally, but he has been a very nice correspondent, and I try to help him out whenever I can. My brother, Bill Bowers, is in charge of the Dundee Presbyterian Church in Omaha—I believe the largest congregation in the entire city—and the wedding in question will be held there—and involves his daughter Susan. So, I'll be in Omaha and will hope to see Larry Lee as the letter reflects.

Anyway, this letter is by way of introduction to Larry if you don't know him already.

Sincerely,

Q. David Bowers  
QDB/rsm

cc: : Larry Lee

Enclosures: Larry's letter to me plus Larry's enclosures



# BOWERS AND MERENA GALLERIES, INC.

*Your friends in the rare coin business*

April 9, 1999

Mr. Lawrence J. Lee  
Curator, Byron Reed Collection  
Durham Western Heritage Museum  
801 South Tenth Street  
Omaha, NE 68108-3299

Dear Larry:

Thank you so much for your letter. In confidence (I will ask them to keep this confidential) I have shared your letter and this answer with Kenneth E. Bressett (address: PO Box 60145, Colorado Springs, CO 80960-0145) and Eric P. Newman (address: 6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63105) who are writing the foreword to the 1804 silver dollar book. Both Ken and Eric are worthwhile for you to know, if you do not know them already. Eric is the "angel" for a museum in the Mercantile Bank in St. Louis. Ken served as past president of the American Numismatic Association and has many other accomplishments. In fact, both are super-accomplished.

I do not have a copy of the reprint that you asked for, but I imagine that a letter to the editor from you, museum curator, put in one of the coin magazines would result in someone giving you one.

I must confess that I am not familiar with the token you illustrate, but this is a perfect Eric Newman item—perhaps he can give you information. Perhaps the G at the center relates to a Masonic influence. The piece is interesting, especially as it has come through Bushnell, and I would be eager to learn any more information that you can send (or receive a copy of the letter Eric sends you about it)—he probably will point out the 17 times it has been offered and give you the location of the six known specimens—just kidding!

I plan to arrive in Omaha on Thursday evening and will be staying at the Aquilla Hotel downtown. I know you will be ready for your reception on Friday, but if you want to catch lunch or have a few minutes to get together, this would be ideal.

April 9, 1999

Page 2

Probably the best thing to do would be to leave a message at the hotel, and if I am not in I can call you back. My brother, Dr. William Bowers, has as his home phone number 402-334-2979. I imagine the house will be as busy as a zoo, and if you call the telephone might be answered by somebody other than the family—so just ask if I am there. Anyway, it might be nice to get together with you as your schedule permits, on Friday. I imagine Saturday will be really hectic, although Saturday morning might be another possibility—, as the wedding doesn't start until the afternoon.

Concerning Reed and the 1804 dollar, before you finalize the booklet, let me send you an update of the tail end of the book. The pedigree listings keep changing (slightly), and every now and then a new name is added. Thus, when you are ready to finalize what you are doing, let me know and I can send you a printout reflecting the status here.

I will copy the second page of your letter, beginning with "The basic story is that" and continuing down to "houses his 1804 dollar." I will quote this, with credit, in the book.

Larry, I look forward to hearing from you further.

Best wishes,

Q. David Bowers

QDB/rsm

cc: Eric P. Newman  
Kenneth E. Bressett

DURHAM  
WESTERN  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM



Q. David Bowers  
Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc.  
Box 1224  
Wolfeboro, NH 03894

April 8, 1999

Dear David,

Thank you for your latest letter. We have (off the record but soon to be public), set May 28 as the Grand Opening date for the Byron Reed exhibit. This is the Friday night of the week you were planning on being in Omaha for your niece's wedding. That evening is the huge gala for special guests and members; I would be thrilled to have you attend as my guest if you are in town. Otherwise, we will have the opening for general public on Saturday, May 29; further, I can arrange to be here on Sunday to also give you a personal tour of the gallery and collection. When ever you can come, we would love to have you and your family come and see us.

Here are a few updates on other things we are talking about:

Parmelee Peace Token I have enclosed a scan of the reverse of the "peace token" included as Lot #579 in the Parmelee sale. I apologize as to its size and quality; it took us several hours just to get that much as we had someone scan it at a much higher resolution that our computers or printers can handle. When you visit, I will provide you with a better scan, including the obverse. For now you can take a look at the "starburst" that is reminiscent of the other Confederatio patterns. You will also note there are 13, not 15 rays, as some of the reports incorrect state.

The pedigree of this piece, as best as I can reconstruct it, reads like a Who's Who of 19th century numismatics: ex Mickley, ex Appleton, ex Bushnell, ex Parmelee, ex Reed. As mentioned in a previous letter, the same or similar piece is described in the Bushnell Sale as Lot #885; and is also mentioned in Betts and in the Mickley sale of 1867. I would be very interested if you have further information about this piece, particularly since early investigators thought it belonged with the other Confederatio patterns.

Money Poster I have also enclosed a copy of the back page of a 1976 *Numismatic Fine Arts* magazine showing the "Universal Money Table and Commercial Exchange Standard" poster we are looking for. Would you happen to have an image of this we could use?

1804 Dollar I was very interested to receive your draft of the book you are doing on the 1804 dollar. I have felt for some time that there needed to be an updated list regarding provenance of these pieces and you are the perfect person to undertake the project; I look forward to reading the rest of the book.

Like you, I have always been suspicious of the little "old lady" in the story of the Parmelee 1804 dollar; there is no way that can be true. I am even a little wary of the next person in the chain, E. Harrison Sanford. Have you been able to locate any more information about him? I have not, but I don't have the research tools you probably have there.

As noted before, I am putting together a little booklet we will sell at the museum gift shop regarding Reed and his 1804 dollar (the "Reeded Edge" series I mentioned). I will be concentrating to a large measure on well-plowed ground: i.e., the story of the minting of the 1804 dollar, descriptive characteristics, who was involved, etc. I do have some information about Byron Reed's acquiring of the coin that I will enlarge on that will probably be the only new information to someone as well acquainted with the story as you are. The basic story is that in 1890, Reed first went to Philadelphia where he served on the Assay Commission; then on to New York for the Parmelee sale where he purchased the 1804 dollar. We have Reed's copy of the Parmelee catalog which has some handwritten notes in it as well as a few other mementos of that trip we can feature. The only part of the story that has been under-reported in the past is that the 1804 was not the only purchase Reed made from the Parmelee sale. To date I have located at least 17 pieces he purchased at the auction, including the plate coin NE shilling, the plate coin Pine Tree shilling, and several other superb pieces, including a silver *Immune Columbia* pattern, and of course the "peace token" mentioned above.

The other point worth mentioning is that Reed put his diagnostic "checkmark" next to any story in *AJN* or other journals about the 1804 dollar. Of course he marked a lot of articles this way, but the 1804 was clearly something he followed. We know he attempted to purchase one at least once before, and that he closely followed who had one and who was trying to purchase one. He was aware of the difference between the Class I and Class III pieces; I don't believe he was involved in the few Class IIs that got out and were then returned. Finally, we know he was pleased that he snatched Parmelee's specimen for only \$570 for a Class I 1804, when the Dupont's paid over \$1,000 for their Class III just a short time later.

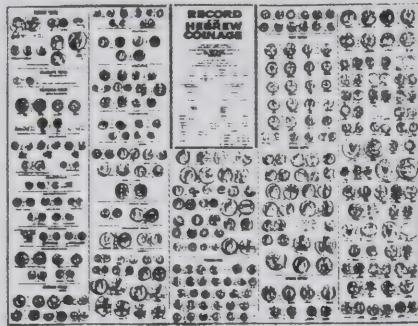
The irony I will close my piece with is that just before he went back East on this trip that marked the culmination of his *entre* in to the numismatic elite, Reed put together the largest land deal ever in Nebraska, where he personally took home over \$300,000 in 1890 dollars. So he was clearly flush when he attended the Parmelee auction. The irony is that the tract of land that he sold at that time includes the parcel where this museum, that now houses his 1804 dollar, sits!

Dave, thank you so much for your help with the above items. I look forward to hearing from you and firming up the date you will be in Omaha and can come and visit us.

Sincerely,

  
Lawrence J. Lee  
Curator, Byron Reed Collection

NOW AVAILABLE . . . . .



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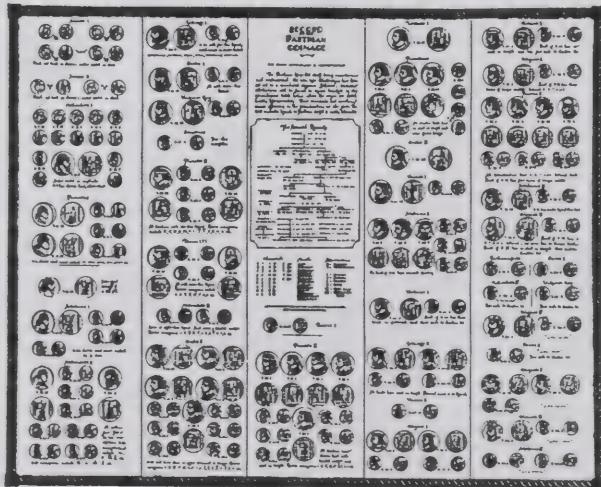
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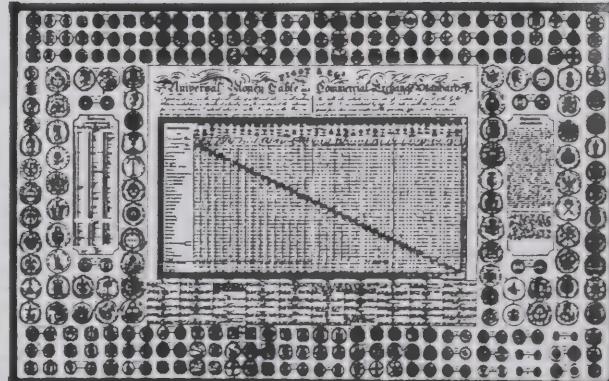
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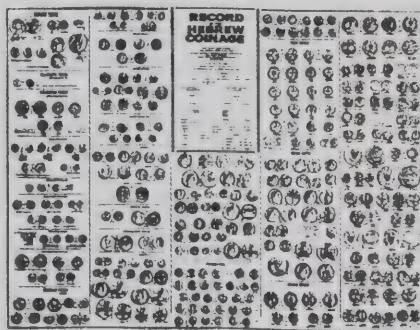


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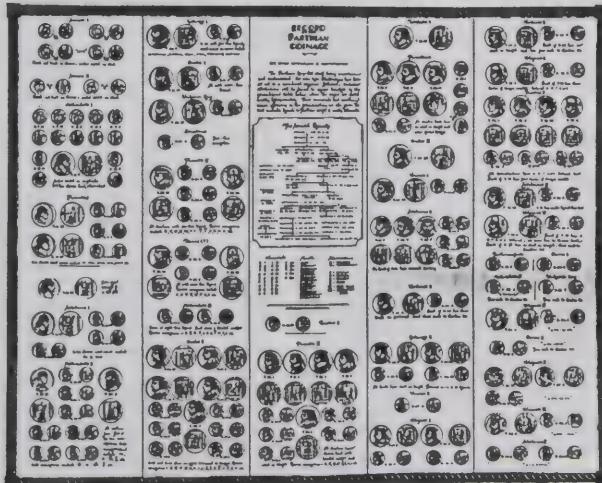
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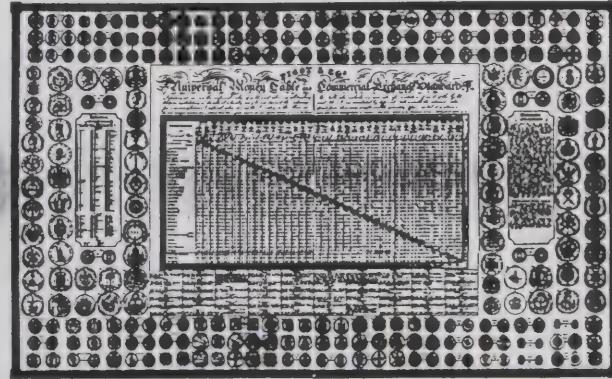
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## ADAMS' OFFICIAL PREMIUM LIST

\$2.50. (1861.) Extremely fine, Wilcox, 1901.....	\$350.00
\$2.50. (1861.) Good, Howard .....	19.00



\$5. (1861.) Fair, Randall, 1885 .....	36.00
--	-------

The above represents the only public records of the prices brought by these pieces. These may be said to be very much under the real value of the coins, both denominations of which are of the highest rarity, the five-dollar piece especially so. Neither of these coins is dated.

It is pretty certain that the name of the senior member of this firm was "Parsons," and not "Parson," as appears on the coins. The omission of the final "s" was probably due to a mistake on the part of the engraver. In all the newspaper references to him the name was spelled "Parsons," and a veteran Denver assayer, who knew the Doctor personally, stated that he was sure the name was spelled with the final "s."

J. J. CONWAY & CO.  
Georgia Gulch  
1861.

Information concerning the establishment which produced the coins of this stamp is very meagre. Some doubt has been expressed that such a mint ever operated in Colorado. Obtainable records, however, show that such a mint did operate for a limited time in 1861. It would seem that the mint was located in Summit County, in Georgia Gulch, which early in 1861 was one of the richest gold fields in Colorado Territory. The Gulch was in the heart of the Snowy Range Mountains, just over the range from Tarryall. At the mouth of the gulch was the town of Parkville, and it is thought there the Conway mint was located. Early in September, 1861, a meeting of the miners and traders was held in order to establish a uniform rate at which gold dust should be current, at the time this commodity ranging in value from \$14 to \$16 per ounce. A disagreement occurred between the miners and traders as to the rate, which promised a deadlock, when the firm of Conway & Co. solved the difficulty by manufacturing their gold pieces. A correspondent of the Rocky Mountain News, of Aug. 21, 1861, says: "There is a mint in Georgia Gulch, conducted by J. J. Conway & Co.,

## U. S., PRIVATE, TERRITORIAL GOLD COINS

jewelers and bankers. Their machinery seems to be as fine as that of Clark, Gruber & Co., and their five and ten-dollar gold pieces look as nice and rich as Uncle Sam himself could get up." The coins must have been issued earlier in August, however, for in the Weekly Rocky Mountain News, of Denver, dated Aug. 14, 1861, the statement was made that a careful assay of a new coin of the denomination of five dollars, "issued by J. J. Conway & Co., of Georgia Gulch," had been assayed, and shown to contain gold of a fineness of  $.722\frac{1}{2}$  and the value in American coin of only \$4.26. There seems to have been a mistake in this first assay, for a later number of the same paper says that as it had been represented that the Conway coins were of light weight and deficient in value, it reproduced the certificate of T. G. Perrenaud, a local assayer, in which it was shown that the Conway five-dollar piece weighed 140.30 grains Troy, the gold being of a fineness of .822, the proportion of silver being .18, and, estimating the silver, the intrinsic value of the coin was \$5.01. The only specimen of the five-dollar piece so far offered at public sale brought \$3,200. It weighed 141.19 grains. All of the coins bearing this stamp are excessively rare. So far as known there are only two specimens of the \$2.50, two of the five, and one of the ten-dollar piece. The three denominations are in the collection of the mint at Philadelphia. A well-known Chicago collector owns the only other known \$2.50 piece. None of the Conway coins is dated.



\$2.50. (1861.) Clemens, 1878.....	\$ 4.00
------------------------------------	---------



\$5. (1861.) Uncirculated, Taylor-Windle, 1908.....	3,200
---	-------



\$10. (1861.) No record of public sale.	
---	--

Aqueduct Company." It was in this venture that he lost most of his money. In addition, Parsons ran a boarding house for invalids to whom he gave board and medical advice.

Dr. Parsons was also a botanist and had an interest in dairy farming. In July 1872 he organized the "Parsons Expedition" to explore the Gunnison country, also known as Elk Mountain. During this excursion, Parsons tested for agricultural potential and mineral resources. Around 1878, Parsons moved to Utah Territory where he died at Browne's Park on January 12, 1881.

#### CONWAY & CO.

A year after the discovery of gold in Colorado, rich deposits were unearthed around the Georgia Gulch area located in Summit County, Colorado. This district was known to be one of the richest gold fields in Colorado Territory.

Soon after the establishment of mining camps in Georgia Gulch, traders began streaming into the settlement loaded with barrels of whiskey and other goods to sell to the miners. An attempt was made by these traders to rate the value of gold at \$14 to \$16 per ounce, but the miners refused to deal with anyone who would not accept gold at \$18 per ounce. The controversy was solved just before August 1861, when J. J. (John) Conway & Co., jewelers and bankers in Georgia Gulch, offered to coin the native gold into \$2½, \$5, and \$10 pieces.

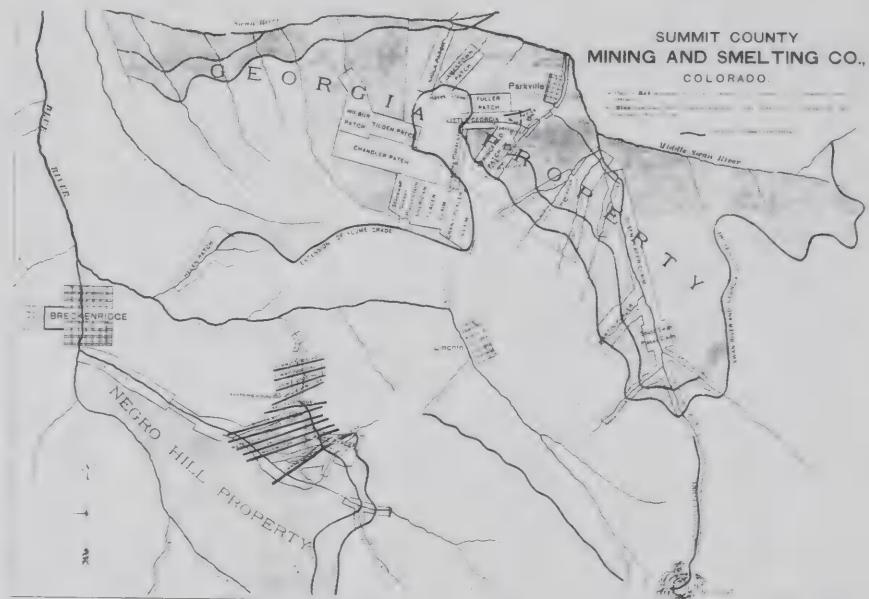
The actual location of Conway & Co.'s mint was probably Parkville, the county seat. An article in the *Rocky Mountain News* (July 16, 1911) mentions that Parkville had its own mint.

Initial reaction to the new Conway & Co. issues was unfavorable. The *Rocky Mountain News* of August 13, 1861, wrote that they had been furnished with a careful assay made in Denver of a new \$5 coin issued by J. J. Conway & Co. of Georgia Gulch, revealing the specimen was only .772½ fine, or worth \$4.26. While the coins may be convenient to the miner in home trade, the article continued, they would probably not bring \$4 in the eastern markets. The editor concluded that the bankers ought to adopt a standard equal to U.S. coins as did Clark, Gruber & Co.

This report proved to be erroneous, for subsequent articles showed Conway's coins as being worth their purported value. A week after publishing its first article, the *Rocky Mountain News* revised its assessment of the issues:

There is a mint in Georgia Gulch, conducted by J. J. Conway & Co., jewelers and bankers. Their machinery seems to be as fine as that of Clark, Gruber & Co., and their five- and ten-dollar gold pieces like as nice and rich as Uncle Sam himself could get up.

*Kayin*  
*(1981)*



*Map of the Georgia Gulch area where Conway & Co. issued their coins. (Western History Department, Denver Public Library)*

Conway, in an attempt to refute the first (adverse) *Rocky Mountain News* article, had a Denver assayer, Mr. Perrenaud, assay and report the true weight and fineness of his pieces. Perrenaud's results, published in the *News* of September 24, indicated an actual weight of 140.3 grains or a true value of \$5.01. As an apology, the *News* printed the following along with the new assay report:

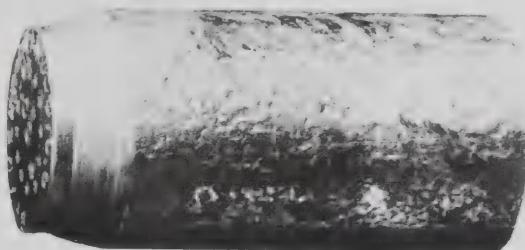
We have several times heard complaints respecting the coinage of J. J. Conway & Co. Bankers, of Georgia Gulch. It having been represented that their coins were of light weight and deficient in value, but an assay made of a five-dollar piece recently, by Mr. Perrenaud of this city, establishes their value and fineness.

Owing to an early dissipation of the gold deposits of Georgia Gulch, Conway ceased operations sometime before the end of the year. The Conway coins remain among the rarest of all private gold issues. Like many early day mining centers, the town of Parkville dwindled and died as production fell, and today nothing remains except the cemetery.

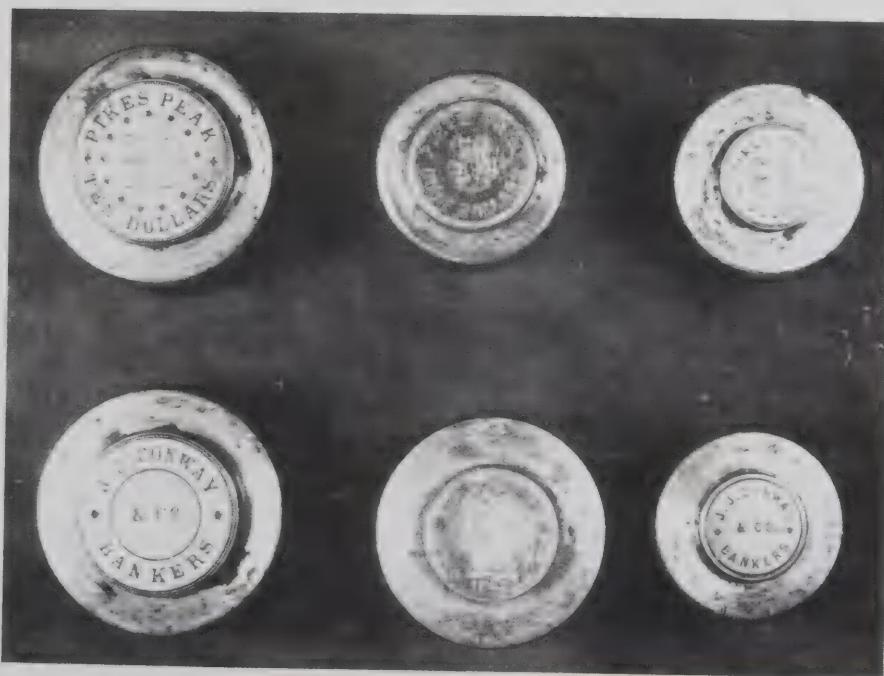
## EARLY USE OF PAPER CURRENCY

Prior to Conway's mint and during Clark, Gruber & Co.'s heaviest

*J.J. Conway & Co.*



1  
Obv  
Rev



2  
Obv  
Rev  
Stru

2a  
Obv  
Rev

3  
Obv  
Rev

J.J. Conway & Co. dies now reposing in the Colorado Historical Society.

A \$2

*J.J. Conway & Co.*  
*Georgia Gulch, Colorado*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Edge</u>	<u>Weight (gms./grns.)</u>	<u>Rarity</u>
-------------	---------------------	-------------	----------------------------	---------------



1. (1861)            \$2 1/2            RE            4.44/68.5            R7  
 Obv. J.J. CONWAY around top, ★ BANKERS ★ below; & CO. center  
 Rev. PIKES PEAK around top, ★ DOLLS ★ below; large ornate 2 1/2 center



2. (1861)            \$5            RE            8.36/129.0            Unique  
 Obv. Similar to K1 but circle of 13 stars surrounding & CO. center.  
 Rev. Similar to K1 but FIVE DOLLARS below, no stars, blank center.  
 Struck over an 1845 \$5 U.S. gold.



2a. (1861)            \$5            RE            7.83/120.8            R8  
 Obv. Similar to K2.  
 Rev. Similar to K2 but large ornate 5 center.



3. (1861)            \$10            PE            16.85/260.0            R8  
 Obv. Similar to K2 but closed ring instead of stars, and flowers instead of stars on sides.  
 Rev. Similar to K1 but circle of 13 stars surrounding 10 and \*TEN DOLLARS\* below.  
 A \$25 lump of melted Conway coins is known to exist.

*Kagin*      321

## *J. J. Conway & Co.*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Metal</u>	<u>Regular Design/Edge</u>	<u>Rarity</u>
1. (1861)	\$5	Gold	K2/RE	Unique

Obv. Similar to regular K2 but no 13 stars.  
Rev. Similar to regular K2.  
Struck on an 1845 \$5 U.S. Gold piece.

## *John Parsons & Co.*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Metal</u>	<u>Regular Design/Edge</u>	<u>Rarity</u>
1. (1861)	\$2½	Silver	K2/RE	R8
				2 Str
Examples are known struck over ½ dimes and dimes.				
1a. (1861)	\$2½	Copper	K2	R8
1b. (1861)	\$2½	Brass	K2	Unique
1c. (1861)	\$2½	Silver	K2/RE	Unique
Struck on a U.S. 1855-O arrows 50¢				

3/18/82



208 \$10 J.J. Conway. Regular dies. 1956 restrike in goldine. In Uncirculated condition. (\$150-225)



209 Gold "button." The consignor, Henry H. Clifford, acquired this "button" with the understanding that it was made from melted-down Conway coins: two pieces of the quarter eagle, two half eagles, and one eagle, although there are no marks or indications to verify this. Weight is 620.0 grains.

This "button," we are told, was acquired with two regular Conway \$2½ (one of which was seriously impaired by exposure to excessive heat, i.e. partially melted) and the splendid Conway \$10, now in the Kagin collection on display at the old San Francisco Mint. According to John Ford this "button" and the coins were found in the ruins of an old building in New Mexico over fifteen years ago. This item is specifically mentioned in Donald Kagin's book. (\$600-850)

### Denver City Assay Office

The Denver City Assay Office is a Colorado enigma. An extensive series of patterns was prepared, as the following offering indicates. However, no specimens are known to have been actually struck in gold. Was the Denver City Assay Office a going operation, or was it one of many dreams, possibly conceived in the East but never brought to fruition? Although Donald Kagin and others have assigned denominations such as \$5, \$10, and \$20 to its various pattern issues, no examples are known which have a denomination expressed as part of the inscription. Indeed, one type of so-called "\$5" has the inscription "FIVE TOKEN," which we believe to be hardly the type of inscription that would be put on a piece intended to be struck in gold and circulated at a value of \$5. (By comparison, the Clark, Gruber & Co. coins of the same era and same city of issue plainly stated the denominations in dollars.)

Certain of the pieces bear the word "KRAATZ," which may have been the name of the person once associated with the operation, although there is no confirmation of this. Donald Kagin quotes a recollection of Milton E. Clark (of Clark, Gruber & Co.) in which Clark stated that he "had a slight remembrance of an assaying firm contemplating the establishment of a gold coinage business in Denver in 1860, but that its plans did not materialize."

These pieces were first really called to the attention of numismatists by J. W. Scott in 1893, who listed four different pieces and noted that they were struck by the Cord Brothers.

The following probably represents the largest selection of Denver City assay office pieces ever auctioned.

### Denver City Assay Office Pattern \$5



See Color Photo

210 1860 Denver City Assay Office \$5 in copper. Plain edge. Extremely Fine. Pleasing chocolate brown surfaces.

The obverse of this piece depicts a small rocky mountain outcrop (the perspective is created by the vegetation and the scale of two birds which are presumably flying nearby). Surrounding is the inscription DENVER CITY / ASSAY OFFICE.

The reverse consists of the inscription FIVE TOKEN above, three stars to either side, and the date 1860 below. At the center is the motif of a crossed shovel and pick with a pan above, and the fraction (without a center bar) 917 1000 below. The reverse is unusual for the period in that the inscription FIVE TOKEN is in sans serif letters, a feature more associated with tokens from the turn of the century (although the \$2½ and \$5 Conway Colorado issues of the same period are in the same style). The so-called "fraction" indicates a fineness of 917 thousandths, perhaps indicative that examples were planned in gold metal.

What does the "TOKEN" inscription on the reverse mean? Were the pieces intended to be issued as gaming counters or tokens, or were the coiners fearful of violating United States coinage laws if they put a dollar denomination on the pieces? Or, is there some other explanation? (\$3000-3500)

Obtained from the P.W. Whittlesey Collection in 1960

### Denver City Assay Office Counterstamped \$5



See Color Photo

211 1860 Denver City Assay Office \$5 in copper. With stars counterstamped. Plain edge. Very Fine or better. Similar to the preceding but with a five-pointed star counterstamped in the right field of the obverse and two five-pointed stars counterstamped on the reverse, as illustrated. Listed and shown on page 304 of Donald Kagin's *Great Gold Coins and Patterns of the United States* book where it is designated as unique: only one specimen known to exist. (\$3000-3500)

Obtained from the P.W. Whittlesey Collection in 1960

3/18/82

## 1861 Clark, Gruber \$20 in Gold



See Color Photo

202 1861 Clark, Gruber & Co. \$20. Gold. A sharp **Extremely Fine** specimen with traces of prooflike surface. Superior to the Garrett Collection coin, and one of the finest examples known to exist. A prize for the territorial gold specialist. (\$10,000-13,500)

## 1861 Clark, Gruber \$20 in Copper



See Color Photo

203 1861 Clark, Gruber & Co. \$20. Trial piece in copper. Reeded edge. **Choice Proof** with medium brown toning. A superb specimen. The dies exhibit a very high degree of workmanship, far finer than that used on the \$2.50, \$5, and \$10 issues of the same year. (\$1000-1350)

## 1861 Clark, Gruber \$20 in Copper, Gilt



See Color Photo

204 1861 Clark, Gruber & Co. \$20. Trial piece in copper, gilt. Reeded edge. With highly polished surfaces due to the gilding, probably originally struck as a Proof. Liberty head design with six stars to the left of the coronet point. (\$1250-1500)

© 1982 by K. K. Scott

## 1861 Clark, Gruber \$20 in White Metal



See Color Photo

205 1861 Clark, Gruber & Co. \$20. Trial piece in white metal. Thick planchet. Plain edge. **Uncirculated** with light toning. Liberty head design with seven stars to the left of the coronet point—and differing from the regular issue design by this feature. Struck slightly off center. Kagin notes that just two or three are known to exist. (\$2000-2350)

Obtained from the Emporium in 1959.

## J. J. Conway &amp; Co.

In August, 1861 the banking firm of J. J. Conway & Co. Georgia Gulch, Colorado, produced several varieties of \$2.50, \$5, and \$10 pieces bearing their imprint. Little is known concerning the background or operations of the company. Apparently coinage was effected for only a short time.

In 1956 the original dies were used to make 200 sets of restrikes in *goldine* metal. These are said to have been struck at the Denver Mint, as part of its fiftieth anniversary celebration.



206 \$2 1/2 J. J. Conway. Regular dies. 1956 restrike in goldine alloy. About Uncirculated. (\$100-200)



207 \$5 (J. J. Conway) *restrike* mule. Obverse from an otherwise unknown die with Liberty head | 13 stars around, date 1862, UNION upon coronet. Reverse that of the regular Conway half eagle Goldine. Plain edge (as on all three of these).

The original purpose of this extremely well executed obverse is unknown: its die accompanied the Conway reverse when both were delivered to the authorities circa 1933-34. (\$100-200)

COLORADO GOLD PIECES  
CLARK, GRUBER & CO. 1860-1861



1860 2 1/2 D.....  
1860 5 D.....

Fine \$800.00  
1,100  
V. Fine \$1,250  
2,000  
E. Fine \$2,000  
3,500  
Unc. \$8,000  
10,000



1860 TEN D.....  
1860 TWENTY D.....

2,750  
15,000  
3,750  
20,000  
6,500  
35,000  
15,000

The \$2.50 and five dollar pieces of 1861 follow closely the designs of the 1860 issues. The main difference is found in the legends. The reverse side now has CLARK GRUBER & CO. DENVER. PIKES PEAK is on the coronet of Liberty.



1861 2 1/2 D.....  
1861 FIVE D.....  
1861 TEN D.....

850.00  
1,200  
1,500  
1,250  
1,750  
2,000  
2,750  
3,500  
7,500  
8,500  
10,000



1861 TWENTY D.....

5,000  
8,500  
18,000

JOHN PARSONS & COMPANY  
Tarryall Mines — Colorado 1861

Very little is known regarding the mint of John Parsons and Co., although it is reasonably certain that it operated in the South Park of Colorado, near Tarryall, in the summer of 1861.

PIKES PEAK GOLD



(1861) Undated 2 1/2 D.....  
(1861) Undated FIVE D — Garrett Sale, 1979.....

V. Fine  
\$55,000  
100,000

J. J. CONWAY & COMPANY  
Georgia Gulch, Colorado, 1861

Records show that the Conway Mint operated for a short while in 1861. As in all gold mining areas the value of gold dust caused disagreement among the merchants and the miners. The firm of J. J. Conway & Co. solved this difficulty by bringing out its gold pieces in August, 1861.

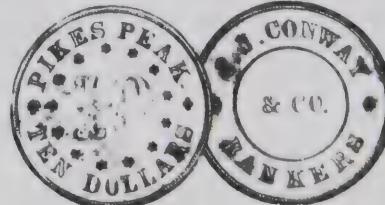


(1861) Undated 2 1/2 DOLLARS.....  
(1861) Undated FIVE DOLLARS — Garrett Sale, 1979.....  
(1861) Undated FIVE DOLLARS, Similar.  
Variety without numeral 5 on reverse — Marks Sale, 1972.....

50,000  
100,000

36,000

(1861) Undated  
TEN DOLLARS.....



# COLORADO FANTASIES

April 1997

by Lawrence J. Lee

You are on your summer vacation, dutifully trailing your wife through yet another Western curio shop, when a sign on the counter catches your eye: "Genuine Whore House Tokens From the Old West! Only \$3.00!" A battered cigar box full of aged, brass disks beckons from under the sign.

Bawdy house tokens! Glancing around to make sure you are unobserved, you casually select one of the pieces from the box. It feels lighter and cheaper than you would have guessed for such a historic item, but such thoughts are quickly squelched by the earthy promises made by the inscription. You begin to imagine what it would be like to visit a red-light district of a gold mining camp. To nervously finger a token like this one while waiting anxiously for Madam Ruth or Miss Rosie to appear....

As various witty opening remarks flit through you head (and before you recall penicillin had not yet been discovered), your wife suddenly appears to ask if the rubber tomahawk or the rattlesnake eggs will make a better souenir for your niece. You quickly stammer out something about Native American sensibilities while sumptitiously sliding the token back into the box.

In this case, the fantasy was not only in your mind, but in your hand as well. Most brothel tokens are examples of fantasies: tokens or medals of recent manufacture that purport to be copies of items that once existed, but which in fact are fictitious in nature. They thus differ from two other token types: fakes, which are counterfeit reproductions of actual tokens; and restrikes, which are copies struck from one or both of the original dies.

Besides bawdy house tokens, there are also spurious pieces that have been made for Colorado's saloons, mines, and railroads. These pieces purport to be from actual Colorado towns and in most cases refer to real establishments, but they are still the metallic figment of someone's overactive imagination.

## BROTHEL TOKENS

The exchange of a token (or check) for sexual favors in a brothel may have begun with the Greeks, since the practice is first mentioned in the writings of Epicurus. Checks and tokens were most certainly used in Europe since the fifteenth century, and may have been used in New England as early as the seventeenth century. There is some debate as to how widespread the usage of brothel tokens actually was in the Old West. Most authorities believe there was rarely an exchange of tokens between patron and courtesan: transactions were done in cash, and

most establishments were too fleeting to have tokens made up. The low number of valid, known brothel tokens would seem to support this view.

Other writers, such as Fred Mazzulla, believe the practice was much more common:

"The use of the brass check came into use very early in the West as a medium of exchange. Inasmuch as there were three entrepreneurs involved in the business – the girls, madame, and the madame's boss – some sort of a standard token was needed. Obviously, a girl could not be permitted to make her own contract within the secrecy of a bedroom. Then, too, the customer knew exactly what he was being charged on purchasing the token. A customer purchased the token before ascending the stairs to the upper room or received it directly from the parlor lady or madame, usually at the price of one silver dollar, or six for five dollars. The token was then tendered to the girl of the customer's selection. The usual receptacle for the token was the girl's stocking. Counting or 'pay-off' time was at daybreak when all tokens were turned into the boss for an accounting. It was not uncommon for one girl in lush times to turn in as many as fifty tokens in one night's work."

Those few genuine brothel tokens that do exist are usually not to be found in cigar boxes at the Tote-M-Pole Curio Shop in Roadkill, Nevada for \$3.00 apiece. Only one token from Colorado is accepted by knowledgeable collectors as being associated directly with an actual brothel. It is a small (21mm) embossed shell card with a picture of a woman's head on one side, and the inscription "Compliments of Miss Olga, 2153 Market Str., Denver" on the other (DE1610a in *Colorado Merchant Tokens*). Between five and seven genuine pieces exist, as well as reproduction copies made in silver, gold, and other material.

Most of the bawdy house tokens now being offered for sale at flea markets and swap meets were manufactured in large quantities during the 1970s and 1980s. They are generally about the size of a silver dollar and are usually made of brass that has been artificially aged by staining with coffee grounds, tumbling in a lapidary drum, or burying underground for a period of time. Others are made of aluminum, a rather anachronistic metal for brothels, since it was not commonly available until after 1890.

Many brothel token fantasies, which look nothing like actual tokens of the era, have incuse, or indented lettering below the surface of the token. Some are uniface while

others have hearts or other shapes cut out of the center.

Amazingly, a few of the racier brothel tokens have actually been counterfeited! Some demented soul with way too much time on his hands has made cast copies of certain brothel fantasy tokens, trying to pass the counterfeit pieces off as real fantasy tokens! This is somewhat like photocopying a poor reproduction of a portrait Rembrandt might have painted if he had lived long enough.

Brothels were an accepted part of all the mining camps until the turn of the century, when various reform movements forced city government throughout the state to declare them illegal. Until they went underground, brothels provided significant revenues for the local economy, since they were usually heavily taxed by the city fathers. In Cripple Creek, alleged site of several of the Colorado fantasies, the tax rate was \$16 per month for each madame, \$6 a month for the girls, or \$4 a month for the independent operators along crib row. With over 300 "ladies" in town, the money generated for the local government was large enough that alternate revenue sources had to be found after brothels were declared illegal.

Another strategy was employed by towns like Glenwood Springs. Prostitution itself was never legal, but brothels were allowed to operate by paying a fine each month to the city government. The fines were always promptly paid, the town's coffers were filled, and city fathers could declare to visitors that Glenwood was a law-abiding community.

Despite the luxury found in the finest bordellos, mining camp brothels were generally bleak, edge-of-existence establishments, full of false gaiety and populated by those at the lowest end of the social ladder. "Half world" residents were shunned by "proper" townsfolk, who, male and female alike, would avert their eyes when meeting a "fallen angel" in the street.

The leading cause of death for prostitutes was suicide, followed by drug overdose, pneumonia, gunshot, and knife wounds. Alcoholism was rampant, and violence was common. As the prostitutes aged, those who were unable to escape their predicament would generally regress downward from the finer houses to the common brothels, from there to the independent operations at the edge of town, and finally to the small one-room cribs in shanty town with the other lepers of the colony.

While I personally feel there is little reason to romanticize this bleak side of mining life with the issuance of bogus, historically inaccurate and misleading tokens, numerous other people obviously do not agree.

## SALOON TOKENS

While brothels as a rule did not use trade tokens, many saloons associated with brothels did indeed issue

tokens that were good for drinks, cigars, or other amenities at the named establishment. Some saloons unsubtly alluded to sex by having "good for" tokens made with a mirror on one side and a racy picture of a fleshy Victorian nude on the other, along with the name of the establishment and a value in trade. Needless to say, most of the mirror tokens were not redeemed for drink, and are consequently fairly scarce today.

There are a number of fantasy saloon pieces supposedly from this period, which should not be confused with the genuine pieces that exist. And contrary to expectations, examples of genuine Colorado saloon tokens associated with brothels are relatively common. For example, the Navarre Hotel, at 1727 Tremont in Denver, was a notorious site for meeting ladies of the night in the first decade of this century. Owned by Ed Chase, a respected Denver businessman and philanthropist, the Navarre was a combination saloon, gambling house, brothel and cafe.

An underground tunnel ran to the basement of the Brown Palace Hotel, so that proper gentlemen need not be seen entering a house of ill-repute. The four-story building was originally built in 1880 by Professor Joseph Brinker as the Brinker Institute for Girls. After Chase purchased it in 1909 it still remained a home for girls, but of a different sort than the good professor had in mind.

There are two tokens (DE10625a and DE10625b) issued by the Navarre during this period, both good for 5¢ in trade in the hotel's bar. One token is relatively rare, with only a few examples known, but the other is rated R-4, meaning 21-35 tokens are believed to exist. Even this rating should probably be lowered to an R-3 or R-2 (51-75 known). With this historical perspective, the various fantasy saloon tokens of recent manufacture seem even more unnecessary and meaningless.

Falling somewhere in the middle between pure brothel and pure saloon is a scarcer token from the Pleasure Palace in Central City [C1330a]. It is good for five cents in trade and only two or three pieces are known. This was probably good at the brothel's saloon, rather than for a nickel's worth of amorous adventure.

Many of the bogus saloon tokens in the following list state they are good for "one shot of Red Eye." "Red Eye" as an alcoholic beverage borrows more from the Hollywood Western than it does from the historical West. The earliest references to whiskey in Colorado are usually to "Taos Lightning," a potent brew imported from New Mexico and "warranted to kill at 40 yards."

## SUMMARY

Along with other quasi-historical items (reproduction belt buckles, Ku Klux Klan regalia, Nazi memorabilia), fantasy tokens are novelty items of little or no historical interest. They generally contain inaccurate or misleading

historical information and could be sold by the unscrupulous to the unwary as genuine items. They are valuable in inverse proportion to what you paid for them: if you only paid \$1.00 for a memento of Miss Katie's Kit Kat Klub, and your friends are of the class that admire imitation brothel tokens, then you probably got your money's worth. On the other hand, if you paid \$100 for a token from an antique store in Fly Spot, South Dakota which you can not display because of the crudity of the message, then you probably should feel more than a little foolish.

### COLORADO FANTASY TOKENS

#### BLACKHAWK (Gilpin County)

B1425 EAGLE NEST MINE / M. DUGAN / OWNER /  
BLACKHAWK, COLO.  
a. Good for / 25¢ / in drinks only  
brass, octagonal, 25mm

#### BRECKENRIDGE (Summit County)

B4435 BLUE GOOSE / GREAT TIMES / SINCE 1859 /  
BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO  
a.\* Good / (heart) / for / (heart) / all / night  
brass, round, 39mm (holed, black incuse letters)

#### CAMP GOLDFIELD (Teller County)

C240 2ND REGIMENT / COLO. / NATIONAL GUARD /  
\* CAMP GOLDFIELD \* / -1904- / DRA  
a. Good for / \* 12½¢ \* / in trade  
brass, round, 24mm

#### CENTRAL CITY (Gilpin County)

C1320 CENTRAL CITY / COLORADO / 1-TR. OZ. / .999 /  
SILVER / 1974  
a. (uniface)  
white metal, round, 38mm

C1545 MISS EVA'S HOUSE / PLEASURE AND PAS-  
SION PALACE / CENTRAL CITY, COLORADO  
(black incuse lettering)  
a. Good for / \$3 / bath / included / all night  
brass, round, 39mm

C1546 (same as C1545, but without black lettering)  
\* brass, round, 39mm

C1625 SQUARE DANCE MINING CO. / P.O. BOX / 272  
/ CENTRAL CITY, COLO.  
A. Good for / \$3 / in native gold  
brass, round, 28mm

#### CRIPPLE CREEK (Teller County)

C4390 \* AT THE \* / PALACE / HOTEL / CRIPPLE  
CREEK, COLO.  
A. Good for / 25¢ / in drinks  
brass, octagonal, 25mm

C4575 CRIPPLE CREEK / PALACE / HOTEL / BAR /  
COLO.  
A. Good for / one shot / of / \* Red Eye \*  
brass, round, 29mm

C4650 FLORENCE & CRIPPLE CREEK / RAIL / ROAD.  
/ 1904 / DRA  
a.\* Good for / 1 / adult / passage  
brass, round, 26mm

C4700 THE GOLD NUGGET / 10 / GOLDEN GALS / TO  
ASSIST / YOU / 10  
a.\* Good for / 50¢ / in trade / whiskey / tobacco / or /  
one screw  
brass, round, 26mm (black incuse lettering)

C4701 (same as C4700 but without black incuse lettering)  
\* brass, round, 26mm



C5485 THE OLD HOMESTEAD / (large heart) / CRIP-  
PLE CREEK, COLO.  
A.\* Good for one screw / (large star) / Hazel Vemon,  
prop.  
brass, round, 38mm

#### DENVER (Denver County)

DE2750 1492 MARKET STREET / TWO UPS / TO  
YOUR / \* ONE DOWN \* / DENVER, COLO.  
A.\* Good for one screw / where the / \* customer \* /  
comes first / Mattie Silks, prop.  
brass, round, 39mm



DE8360a (diamond) / SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / (diamond) / (heart cutout) / DENVER. COLO.

A.\* (diamond) / Good for one screw / (diamond) / Ruth Jacobs, prop.  
white metal, round, 38mm

DE8360b (diamond) / SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / (diamond) / (heart cutout) / DENVER. COLO.

A.\* (diamond) / Good for one screw / (diamond) / Ruth Jacobs, prop.  
brass, round, 38mm



DE8360c SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / — / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* (same)  
brass, round, 38mm

DE8360d SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / — / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* All night / \$3 / check  
brass, round, 38mm

DE8360e SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / — / DENVER, COLO. (black, thick incuse lettering, two dashes)

A.\* All night / \$3 / check  
brass, round, 38mm (black, thick incuse lettering)

DE8360f SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / — / DENVER, COLO. (black, thin incuse lettering, two dashes)

a.\* All night / \$3 / check  
brass, round, 38mm (black, thin incuse lettering)



DE8360g (heart) / SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / (heart) / THE BEST / SCREWS / IN TOWN / DENVER, COLORADO (black incuse lettering)

a.\* Good for / \$3 / bath / included / all night  
brass, round, 38mm (black incuse lettering)

DE8360h (same as DE8360g only no coloring, different metal)

a.\* Good for / \$3 / bath / included / all night  
lead?, round, 38mm

DE8360i SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* (uniface)  
brass, round, 44mm (small, black incuse lettering; "R" in "Ruth" 4mm from "D" in "Denver")

DE8360j (same, but with large, black incuse lettering; "R" in "Ruth" 2mm from "D" in "Denver")

a.\* (uniface)

DE8360k (same, but with 5-pointed star under "Prop.", large, black incuse lettering; "R" in "Ruth" 2mm from "D" in "Denver")

a.\* (uniface)  
brass, round, 44mm

DE8360l SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / — / DENVER, COLO. (all incuse, no colored lettering)

a.\* (uniface)  
brass, round, 44mm

DE8360m SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / — / DENVER, COLO. (all incuse, no colored lettering)

a.\* (stamped "Copy")  
brass, round, 44mm

DE8360n SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH JACOBS / PROP. / (scroll design) / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* All night / \$3 / check  
brass, round, 44mm

DE8370a SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH CAMPBELL / PROP. / (five-point star) / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* (uniface)  
brass, round, 44mm



DE8370b SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / RUTH CAMPBELL / PROP. / X / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* (uniface)  
white metal, round, 44mm (black incuse lettering)

DE8370c SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH CAMPBELL / PROP. / Y / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* (uniface)  
brass, round, 44mm

DE8370d SILVER DOLLAR HOTEL / GOOD / FOR ONE / SCREW / MADAME / RUTH CAMPBELL / PROP. / Z / DENVER, COLO.

A.\* (uniface)  
brass, round, 44mm

DE9233 THE BROWN DOG / SALOON / R. L. & F. M. BROWN, / (crossed arrows) PROPS. (crossed arrows) / DENVER, / COLO.

A. Good for / (line) / (line) one (line) / (bow) / Sarsaparilla / (line) / at the bar (heart cutout in center)  
brass, 10 scallops, 31mm

#### EMPIRE (Clear Creek County)

E3980 EMPIRE CITY MINE / 1876 / EMPIRE, COLO.  
Colorado Gold / (value) / (\*\*\* Dollars (\*\*\*)

a. 2½  
brass, round, 22mm

b. 2½  
copper, round, 22mm

c. 5  
brass, round, 29mm

d. 5  
copper, round, 28mm



E3981 EMPIRE CITY MINE / 1876 / EMPIRE, COLORADO  
Colorado Gold / (value) / (\*\*\* Dollars (\*\*\*)

a. 10  
brass, round, 34.5mm

b. 10  
copper, round, 34.5mm

E3990 GOLD BUG MINES / EMPIRE, COLORADO / 1-TR. OZ. / .999 / SILVER / 1974

a. (uniface)  
white metal, round, 38mm

#### GEORGETOWN (Clear Creek County)

G440 GEORGETOWN / COLORADO / 1-TR. OZ. / .999 / SILVER / 1974

a. (uniface)  
white metal, round, 38mm

G441 GEORGETOWN / COLORADO / 1-TR. OZ. / .999 / SILVER

a. (uniface)  
white metal, round, 42.5mm

G470 FROM / HOTEL DE PARIS / GOOD FOR / 24 / HOURS / LOUIS DUPUY / GEORGETOWN, COLO.

a. Wine, women and / song / first / class / one / high class lay / Madame Sophies motto: Satisfaction guaranteed  
brass, rectangular, 34x79mm

#### IDAHO SPRINGS (Clear Creek County)

I835 IDAHO SPRINGS / COLORADO / 1-TR. OZ. / .999 / SILVER / GOLD RUSH DAYS / 1974

a. (uniface)  
white metal, round, 38mm

#### LEADVILLE (Lake County)

LE2160 LEADVILLE / 1974 / COLORADO / 1-TR. OZ. / .999 / SILVER

a. (uniface)  
white metal, round, 38mm



LE2175 LEADVILLE, COLO. / EAT - DRINK / (heart) DANCE (heart) / GO TO BED / OR GET OUT / LAURA EVENS

a. (uniface)  
brass, round, 44mm

LE3945 THE TOPIC SALOON / 1890 / LEADVILLE / COLO. / (bow)

a. Good for / \$ 1.00 / in trade  
brass, round, 35mm

#### PARKVILLE (Summit County)

P1932 J. J. CONWAY & CO. BANKERS / (rev prop) / 1861 / PARKVILLE COLORADO

a. Good For / 1 / shot / of / Red Eye  
brass, round, 23mm

#### SILVERTON (San Juan County)

S4580 BLAIR HOUSE / GOOD / FOR ONE / \* SCREW \* / MADAME / JEW FANNY / PROP. / SILVERTON, COLO.

a. All night / (heart) \$3 (heart) / check  
brass, round, 38mm

#### VICTOR (Teller County)

V5460 VICTOR / \* / MURPHY'S / SALOON / \* / COLO.

a. Good for / one shot / of / \* Red Eye \*  
brass, round, 28.5mm

#### WHITEHORN (Chaffee County)

W6360 THE KLONDIKE SALOON / - / VOTE FOR / LEE NOTT / TAMS / - / BOARD OF GOV. / WHITEHORN, COLO.

a. Good for / \* (rev p) \* / \* \$ 1.00 \* / \* (rev p) \* / in trade  
brass, 12 scallops, 38mm

#### Mavericks

Unl. '59 / GOLD / RUSH

a. Good for / one share of / stock in / Early Bird / gold mine  
brass, round, 31mm

Unl. BIG MATILDA / 300 LBS. / \* OF \* / BLACK PASSION / ALL HOURS

a. Good for / 50¢ / in trade  
aluminum, round, 32mm

#### NOTES ON CATALOG NUMBERS

The catalog numbering system used in this listing is the same as used by Jim Wright and Lee Nott in *Colorado Merchant Tokens*. Many of the pieces listed here appear in that important book and the same catalog numbers, as well as some of the information supplied by Wright and Nott, has been used in this listing. For those pieces not listed in *Colorado Merchant Tokens*, a temporary catalog number was assigned based upon Wright's numbering system. These provisional numbers are indicated with an asterisk (\*) on the line of the reverse description. Many of the other pieces are listed by Albert; the remainder of the fantasies are from the author's own collection or those owned by other collectors. There are undoubtedly many other Colorado fantasies that could be added.

#### B1425

These tokens were manufactured in 1968, reportedly by Mike Dugan. See C1625a.

#### B4435

Unlisted in Albert. Breckenridge was founded in 1859, but there were no women in the town for several years.

#### C240

These tokens were manufactured in 1973. Camp Goldfield was the tent city occupied by the Colorado National Guard during the long and bloody labor war in the Cripple Creek District. The strike lasted over a year and a half and 33 people were killed before it was over. The strike idled almost 4,000 men and brought about the com-

plete collapse of organized labor in the gold camp. No genuine tokens were issued for use in this camp.

C1320

See G440.

C1545

Listed in Alpert.

C1625

Reportedly made in 1968 by Mike Dugan. See B1425

C4390

These tokens were manufactured in 1971. See C4575.

C4575

Most specimens of these tokens have clearly been artificially aged to appear genuine, but rather than old they just look stained.

The Palace Hotel, at the northwest corner of Second Street and Bennett Avenue, was the best hotel in Cripple Creek. Originally built by Joe Wolfe as the Joseph H. Wolfe Hotel, its name was changed to the Palace when Wolfe skipped town to duck his creditors. He went to Oklahoma where he made a lot of money operating a skin game. Eventually he returned to Cripple Creek and became the Palace Hotel's manager.

C4650

Listed in Alpert. Believed to have been made by the same party who made C240.

The Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad was a narrow gauge line than ran between those two cities through a steep ravine known as Eight-Mile Gulch. Completed in 1894, it was one of railroad tycoon David Moffat's less successful enterprises. Initially the F. & C. C. made money, paying off its \$800,000 construction costs within the first year of operation. However, once the rival Midland Terminal line reached Cripple Creek in 1895, the F. C. & C. never made another cent for its owner.

C4700

Not listed in Alpert or Wright. Similar in size, lettering, metal and appearance to C1545.

C5485

Sample token not available. Listed in Alpert.

The Old Homestead Parlour House, at 353 Myers Ave, was one of Cripple Creek's most famous brothels. As Feitz notes, the Old Homestead "enjoyed the greatest fame and the finest clientele of any Gold Camp brothel. From the day this posh house opened, it was the playground of the mining kings and known throughout the West." The house was originally built to fulfill the provisions for homesteading; thus the name of the later brothel.

Part of the Old Homestead's reputation as the premier "resort" in the area came from its many amenities, including electric lights, running water, telephone, intercom, and

the finest wines and liquors available. One interesting feature of the Old Homestead was the hallway window on the second floor, through which a "client" could observe and choose his companion.

The rates at the Old Homestead were steep, and only those known to management could get in. Trips to the establishment were arranged well in advance; no one just "dropped in." Besides the madame and five or six "boarders," the house staff included a housekeeper, two maids, two butler/bouncers, a piano player, and a porter. Hazel Vernon and Pearl DeVere were the Homestead's two most famous madames. When DeVere died in 1897 from an overdose of morphine, her elaborate funeral included a twenty piece marching band, mounted police officers, and mounds of flowers sent from as far away as Denver.

We can be positive that this brothel never used tokens and this piece is a fantasy, because the Old Homestead is still standing on Myers Avenue and is now a museum of a turn-of-the-century brothel.

DE2750

Unlisted in Alpert. Mattie Silks was an actual madame in Denver.

DE8360

Many of the Silver Dollar tokens were made by a prominent Denver attorney in the 1970s. There are seventeen varieties listed here and probably several more that could be added. All of the varieties vary only slightly in metal, wording, whether they are incuse or not, whether they have black letters or no coloring, and in the two different sizes. Only the two with heart cutouts appear from a different manufacturer; all the rest are quite similar and in fact quite similar to several other fantasies (i.e. Miss Eva's, Mattie Silks, Blair House, etc). Ruth Jacobs was an actual madame in Denver, but there was no known hotel by this name. Pictured and listed in Alpert.

DE8370

See DE8360.

DE9233

This personal token, which was made circa 1976 for Robert L. Brown, author of several books on Colorado ghost towns, is illustrated on page 152 of the October, 1996 *TAMS Journal*.

E3980, E3981

Empire, forty-five miles west of Denver, was a booming mining town in 1876, primarily due to the efforts of James Peck, the "Emperor of Empire." Peck had come to Colorado from Illinois in 1859, leaving behind the graves of his first wife, two infant sons, and a young daughter. Though he had a successful shipping business in Chicago, the tragedies that befell him in his early years made Peck more than eager to try and change his luck in "Pikes Peak" country.

And in fact Peck's luck did change. His first claim, the

Atlantic Mine, was soon producing respectable amounts of gold ore. He built a cabin, to which he soon added four more rooms, and then another seven more. By 1862 the "Peck House" was known as one of the better hotels of the region.

Over the past 140 years many different luminaries have stayed at the Peck House, including Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, and P. T. Barnum. Amazingly, it is still open for business, easily making it the oldest hotel in continuous operation in Colorado. Peck House is said to still be haunted by the ghost of Peck's granddaughter, Gracie, who died of tuberculosis in the house in 1885 at the age of fourteen.

Peck helped found the town of Empire, and lived there in relative luxury the rest of his life. Before being accidentally killed in 1880 by falling from a buggy, he acquired ore mills, a general store, the post office concession, and several other profitable mine holdings around Empire.

The Empire City Mine was located in 1861 and worked spasmodically for several years. In 1876 (the date stamped on the token) two men sank a 300-foot shaft and took out gold running 270 ounces to the ton, which made it one of the richest mines in the world for a brief time. The mine was reopened in the 1930s and a new portal and tunnel that ran 1800 feet was built, presumably from funds raised by the sale of stock. According to an unattributed article in *Coin World*, "Anyone buying stock got a Token. Big stock buyers got silver or base gold Tokens. The rest got copper or brass, mostly brass. The Tokens were used as poker chips also." About 1950 the tunnel caved in and all that now remains of the mine is the dump.

The earliest known tokens from Empire date to the turn of the century, well after Peck's death and the supposed date of these Colorado Gold tokens. The story of James Peck and the Empire City Mine tokens is told more fully by Edward Rochette in "The Ghost of Peck House," *The Numismatist*, October 1989.

#### E3990

See G440.

#### G440

Cast, incuse lettering, rough reverse. This series of fantasies, including C1320, E3990, 1835, and LE2175, were made by Mike Dugan, owner of the Empire City Mine (see B1425 and E3980). Dugan sold these pieces as souvenirs in his gift shop for \$6.00 during the mid-1970s. They are pictured and described more fully in the DesLauriers article.

#### G441

Diestruck, smooth reverse. Also described in his article by DesLauriers, who believes it is older and made by a different person than the smaller Dugan versions (G440a).

#### G470

Listed in Alpert. Rectangular, brass key tag with lots of intricate design work. In small letters the tag says "Colo. Minting Co," an unknown organization. The Hotel de Paris still exists in Georgetown and was indeed run for many years by the Frenchman Louis Dupuy. The hotel was never operated as a brothel except in the minds of the token manufacturer. Must have been that exotic "de Paris" that set someone's glands working overtime.

#### 1835

See G440.

#### LE2175

Listed in Alpert. These tokens were made "by the hundreds" by a collector in Colorado, who claimed they were from the trunk of an 87-year old gentleman. They have been tumbled and stained to look old. See Christiansen article for photo and more information.

#### LE3945

Personal token struck for James E. Andrews, prominent Colorado collector. Andrews had an extensive collection of Leadville tokens, including several R-10 pieces pictured in *Colorado Merchant Tokens*. It is illustrated on page 152 of the October, 1996 *TAMS Journal*. The Topic Saloon, at 501 Harrison Avenue, was one of Leadville's most famous bars. Besides this fantasy, there are three different real Topic Saloon tokens; all are quite scarce.

#### P1932

These tokens were given to coin dealers as souvenirs of the Denver Coin Show in 1978. They were redeemable at the hotel bar for drinks, but only 50 of the 300 tokens minted were turned in. This piece is loosely based on the real J. J. Conway territorial gold pieces, which are quite rare and valuable.

#### S4580

Not listed in Alpert. No further information found.

#### V5460

Illustrated on page 20 of the *TAMS Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Feb. 1972. George Murphy is listed in the 1914 City Directory as proprietor of a business called Murphy's Smoker, selling cigars and tobacco. No "Murphy's Saloon" is known. When Colorado went "dry" on 1 January 1916 many of the saloon owners changed their bars into cigar stores and/or billiard parlors, or simply went out of business. So while it is possible that there was once a Murphy's Saloon in Victor, that establishment most certainly never issued this token.

#### W6360

Struck by Lee Nott, co-author of *Colorado Merchant Tokens*, in his bid for a seat on the Token and Medal Society's Board of Governors.

(concluded on page 69)

# Colorado Fantasies

(concluded from page 54)

## Mavericks

GOLD RUSH '59: the Pikes Peak gold rush officially got underway in 1858, though there are more than thirty different references to explorers and mountain men finding gold prior to that year. This rather plain-looking token is included with the other Colorado fantasies because 1859 was the first year that significant gold discoveries were made in Colorado, no other significant gold rushes were going on at the time, and the "early bird" to the Pikes Peak region was said to still have a chance to make a fortune. No further information about the token is known.

BIG MATILADA: this token proves that fantasies can be racist as well as sexist. According to Ed Rochette, only 100 were minted. He says they are supposed to be from Denver.

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2178 [17639] Civil War Veterans.  
National gold medal, 1956. 0.999 Fine (nearly pure gold). 10.24 troy ounces, diameter: 69.8 mm. Essentially as struck, save for two minuscule edge test cuts. Lustrous matte-like surfaces. A rarity of great importance, forging as it does a direct link with one of the last surviving veterans of the War Between the States.

Obverse with conjoined busts of Grant and Lee to right, Grant's name behind his head, Lee's name in front of his face, HONOR TO GREAT SOLDIERS arcs above, AND TO GREAT AMERICANS arcs below, G. ROBERTS 1956 on truncation, reverse with Union and Confederate shields at top, torch with crossed olive branch and sword between, PRESENTED / WITH HONOR / TO THE SURVIVING VETERANS / OF THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES / ACT OF THE CONGRESS OF THE / UNITED STATES / OF AMERICA in seven lines below. This beautiful and historically important medal contains *more* than 10.5 ounces of .999 fine gold! Struck by order of the 84th Congress, 2nd Session, pursuant to Public Law 730, Chapter 631, and approved by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on July 18, 1956. Designed by Gilroy Roberts and struck at the Philadelphia Mint. *Only four examples were struck* and the dies then destroyed. Of those four pieces, one is now in the Smithsonian Institution, while another was reportedly destroyed by vandals.

The other two medals were awarded, one each, to Walter Williams of Houston Texas, and John Salling of Grundy, Virginia, both Confederate veterans. This specimen is the Williams piece, originally purchased from the family some time prior to its appearance at auction in 1976. Housed in its tan box of issue.

From Stack's ANA Sale, August 1976, Lot 3321.

5760

2179 [23044-a,b,c] Columbian  
Exposition medals, 1892-3. "Morgan dollar style," large and small formats.

Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Columbus's journey to the New World. All are attractive and essentially as made. Obverse copied after George T. Morgan's silver dollar of 1878, but here in higher relief and with some stylistic differences. ~ Gilt. 89.4 mm ~ Bronze (2). 89.4 mm, and 35.9 mm ~ Aluminum. 89.4 mm. Same design on each, obverse with circle of 49 small stars around head of Liberty to left, 1892 below bust, reverse with landfall of Columbus scene, DEDICATED TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN HONOR OF THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA around. Dies signed W.M. on Liberty's truncation.

Gilt. 3,513.3 grains; 89.4 mm. • Bronze. 3,430.6 grains; 89.4 mm. • Small bronze. 252.4 grains; 35.9 mm. • Aluminum. 1,124.6 grains; 89.4 mm. • Aluminum, small: 79.2 grains, 35.9 mm. (Total: 5 pieces).

Photo Reduce

2180 1893 Christopher Columbus  
medal, American Numismatic and Archaeological Society, by Tiffany. [17843] Bronze. 3,962.5 grains; 76.9 mm. Matte surfaces as issued. Plain edge.

Obverse with mythical portrait of Columbus facing left. Reverse with inscription from a grateful America which "honors its discoverer." Struck by Tiffany & Co. for the Society. A large, impressive, and somewhat scarce medal.

2181 J.J. Conway: Trio of restrikes.  
Circa. 1956. Average AU-58, or finer. Each lightly polished: ~ 1861 \$2.50. Kagin-1 ~ 1862 \$5. K-2 ~ Undated (1861) \$10. K-3. the complete set of three pieces. All pieces are struck in goldine, and 200 sets were issued. An interesting group of fantasy pieces. (Total: 3 pieces)

This set is quite curious and interesting. Production is said to have occurred within the walls of the Denver Mint, circa 1956. To our knowledge, goldine (a brass-like alloy) was the only metal used, but who knows? The \$2.50 and \$10 pieces are similar to the original issues of circa 1860, while the \$5 piece is a fantasy combining dies for which there was no original counterpart. The \$5 obverse, dated 1862, bears the inscription UNION on a copy of the portrait from the contemporary federal \$5 coin. The reverse is the \$5 Conway die.

These issues point out the need for additional study of certain territorial-related gold coins of the mid-19th century. The dies for various Colorado issues were probably made in the East, and no doubt a careful study of die punches would reveal the source, especially if they were made in one of the hotbed cities of token issuance such as Cincinnati (in particular), Philadelphia, or New York. Today the Conway "restrikes" are quite elusive, and only occasionally do we encounter sets such as this.

2182 Counterfeit detector balance scale.  
British gold coin scale, probably mid 19th-century, known as [first letters not clear]mmons's Improved Sovereign Balance to "Weigh and gauge sovereigns and half sovereigns, so exact that no counterfeit can possibly go through the gauge of sufficient weight to turn the balance." Mint condition, sparkling brass, housed in a somewhat tattered red cardboard slip-box of origin, the front label partly missing.

This is one of a large class of balance scales to test gold coins. The particular variety having been made in England, a counterpart to numerous American issues. Years ago such devices were fairly common in British antique and related shops, and the writer can recall seeing them on the early morning market in Portobello Road, this being circa 1960. However, rarely were they in the condition as offered here, and still rarer yet, in the original box (in fact, we can't recall ever seeing one in an original box).

The attention of present readers is called to a related book

1999 draft of Boners' Catalog on Bass sale.

In Adams 1909 book

he says there is a  
Conway mentioned.

as being in an auction.

Also mentions  
Neuromer Collection.

Coronet of Conway #5 obr  
does not read CONWAY

DATE IS 1862

Upper and lower collars same size  
No collars in size of coins  
Collars dimensions not given  
Collars probably are planchet cutting dies  
as you can get coins out.  
No reeding on collars

No pictures of genuine coins.

1909 pictures omitted.  
~~First~~ Burned die & gold coins <sup>new found</sup> not cleaned  
for 75 years or were in machine shop  
for 75 years.

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